Preface

Larsen Legacy: Volume 8 "Miles, Milestones, and Miracles" continues our family saga for 2004, 2005, and 2006. In a Christmas card sent to friends and family for Christmas 2005, the following was written:

> *We were all smiles (well, almost all) as we posed for our first complete family group picture in many years. We had come from Logan (Stephani and Lindsay, Shauntel and Randy), Tennessee (Steve and Bonnie), Boise (David and Andrea), Seoul Korea (Becky and Chet), China (John and Laurel), Washington (Mike and Marci), Wisconsin (Paul and Jenny), Provo (Tim), and Moreland (Steve, Me, and SaraKay.)*

These years were unprecedented for miles traveled. And although some families were thousands of miles removed, several settled closer and provided a supportive group when special occasions called for gathering. Fortunately, everyone put a high priority on family relationships and despite the distances, expense, and inconvenience, everyone came and our reunions became times of strengthening, rejoicing, and bearing testimony of the Lord's tender mercies" in our lives.

Milestones met included advanced degrees completed (Randy, Chet, Mike, Paul, Jenny, and Tim), babies born (Drake, McKay, Tessa, Amber, Ben and Sophie) and the joyous occasion of Mike and Marci's wedding! Daddy's service in the stake presidency also must be mentioned as a personal achievement in his long history of valiant Church service.

And Miracles, great and small, including the preservation of Baby Tessa as well as our two Asian families who returned from a Christmas holiday in Thailand, to learn that just hours after their departure a tsunami struck Club Med where they had been staying, leaving destruction in its wake. Also, among the miraculous was the safety afforded every member in their various travels, the securing of good employment, and the arrival of six new little ones, safe and whole.

This compilation of letters bears witness of these years and the challenges faced. They tell of travels and travails, of work and worry, and ultimately of the undeniable "watchcare" of a loving Father. I hope as you read this book that it will give you cause for reflection and amazement in the lives of those who share your DNA. With love, Mom

Dedication

To each family, far or near, who expended time and money and endured the long-haul trips to attend family reunions and special events. Your strong commitment to family enabled us to strengthen the "ties that bind" despite the distances involved.

Acknowledgements

To the siblings who sent photos to add color and interest to this volume

To John who, despite the pressures of a new job, formatted and fine-tuned the rough draft, and produced a noteworthy, finished book.

To Steve, who graciously resolved my frequent computer problems, enabling the completion of another Larsen Legacy volume.

To SaraKay who spent part of her summer vacation editing the manuscript, downloading photos, and encouraging me when my resolve slackened.

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The Larsen Legacy

Volume 8: 2004-2006

Miles, Milestones, and Miracles

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2004

January 2, 2004

[Mom] We're overdue for this letter. The weeks leading up to the holidays were so busy that I wasn't sure if I was going to survive or not. Thank goodness the charter school started its Christmas break on December 19th instead of on the 23rd like Snake River schools did. It gave me the time I needed to complete my shopping and other preparations.

Our trip to Logan on the 20th was fun. We arrived at Steve and Bonnie's that morning and Bonnie and I decorated sugar cookies with the kids while Daddy and Steve made a quick trip to town. We enjoyed the chance to be together and see their preparations for Christmas.

After a delicious lunch we left for Steph and Linds' and joined them and Tim, who had been staying in Logan for a few days after he completed finals. We had a chance to do some visiting and even walked their golden retriever, Bay, before the bunch left for "Lord of the Rings." I opted to stay home since I haven't enjoyed the series. I had some quiet time to prepare my talk for the next day and relax with a Gary Larson comic book. Steve and Bonnie also joined the bunch at the theater. Three hours later they arrived home with glowing reports of the movie! It was fun to discuss it over a bowl of steaming stew before leaving for home about nine p.m.

Tim received instructions from Linds on how to get to the Amtrak station in Salt Lake before leaving about ten to pick up Mike who was scheduled to arrive at 11:30. Although the instructions were relatively easy, Tim exited in Bountiful instead of Salt Lake and went on a wild goose chase before realizing that both Bountiful and Salt Lake have similar North and South designations. Once he got going again, he arrived within throwing distance of the station, but couldn't figure out how to get to it. He decided to park his car and walk. The neighborhood wasn't the most wholesome and at one point he approached a store called the Trap Door to ask directions. There was a fellow standing out front whom he questioned, but he didn't know any more than Tim did. As he was standing there, a couple of men came out of the bar, kissing, and Tim realized that he was definitely in the wrong place! He located a police officer who directed him and soon he was parked at the station. The train was delayed so Mike arrived only a few minutes before Tim and he quickly gathered his belongings and joyously greeted Tim.

From there they proceeded to Lyman's place only to knock and knock and not be able to rouse him. They called on a pay phone and finally got Lyman to answer. When they returned, Lyman put them up for the night. Mike was so exhausted from his 31-hour trip that he fell fast asleep, but Tim slept fitfully until they got up about eight to get ready for church. They arrived here that afternoon, hungry and tired.

On Monday Mike, Tim, and I left first thing for Idaho Falls to finish up my shopping. It was fun to have them along! On Wednesday we picked up Grandpa Larsen and went to Chet and Becky's for Christmas Eve. After dinner we had the nativity story complete with costumed characters and then Maddie and Tate performed for us. About 7:00 Daddy and I left to return Grandpa to the rest home and the kids stayed at Becky's to help with things there. Daddy and I got home a little after eight and prepared things for Christmas before the kids arrived back from Becky's. On Christmas day, both AlvaLu and Grandpa were here with us for several hours.

Thursday Paul, Jenny, and Beth arrived about noon. It was so fun to see the changes in Beth. She is such a sweet child and wowed us with her knowledge of the alphabet. One evening we were playing "Upwords," a game similar to Scrabble. After we were through, Jenny would hold up a letter and Beth would say the name of the letter. We even tried to trick her by showing her the letters turned upside down or sideways, but she would right them before responding and then say them correctly.

On Saturday afternoon Mike left for Logan. Steph lined him up with Korinda and Brook Corbridge, daughters of some of her friends. He called Sunday night to say that he was impressed with them both and hoped to have follow-up dates before he left on Saturday for Iowa. He had a busy itinerary of dating all this week and called us occasionally to report how he was getting along.

On Sunday Becky and Chet joined us and Steph and Linds arrived from Logan. They had planned to come sooner but the weather was so bad that they waited until Sunday. The next morning we took the kids sledding at the junior high school. Before they left for home the wind started up again. Fortunately, they had a four-wheel drive pickup and they left about three for home. Four

hours later they called to say that they were nearly to Logan! A trip of two hours had taken them over four! Steph said that over the Malad Pass there was only one lane of traffic and it was moving about 30 mph. We were grateful they arrived home safely.

On Tuesday we went to the temple. SaraKay watched the kids at Becky's while she joined us. The weather the night before was so bad I was apprehensive about going but Paul and Jenny took their four-wheel drive vehicle and we took it slow and easy. Daddy was to meet us at the temple and later related that there had been a semi-truck jack-knifed on the interstate and he had turned around and drove to Idaho Falls on the old highway to get to the session on time. It felt good to be in the temple together!

We arrived at Becky's and appreciated her offer of lunch. When we got there, there was a message from her realtor that he wanted to show the house that afternoon. After lunch, we all pitched in and helped her get things ready. I know how harried it is to try to sell a house with small children under foot. These next few weeks are going to be stressful. Chet received word that he will fly out tomorrow and the whole family is scheduled to leave the last week in February. It's overwhelming thinking about all the details that need to be taken care of in these next few weeks.

Paul and Jenny left Wednesday afternoon for Bountiful. Dad and I chaperoned the youth dance that night and we spent yesterday just relaxing and watching a little football. We were going to go to Utah today to see Mike off, but the storm that raged yesterday left us snowbound. Hopefully the sunny skies today portend a few days of good weather so that we can go to Salt Lake tomorrow, caravan with Tim, and bring my car back.

Mike gets on Amtrak at 4 a.m. tomorrow. From all accounts, he has had a productive time in Utah and has met some girls that he is interested in. We are anxious to hear from him. When Paul called, he reported that Mike and Marci, the girl Jenny's cousin lined him up with, spent part of yesterday with them and that they seemed to be enjoying each other. I'm sure that after Mike's return to Iowa, he will be emailing some of these girls. We appreciated everyone accommodating him over the holidays.

January 4, 2004

[Mom] I am sitting here in the computer room listening to my new CD "Consider the Lilies" and feeling like all is well with the world. The last few days have been hectic, made more so by the inclement (but greatly appreciated) weather which has wreaked havoc on our area. On Thursday night an unusual storm rolled through the area, with lightning and high winds, downing trees, rolling mobile homes, and lifting roofs off of buildings. Needless to say, the power was out for much of Blackfoot for several hours and repair and emergency crews were busy all night. The good news is that we have received a significant amount of snow and more is predicted for the coming week. We are grateful for the moisture.

Many of you have asked regarding Mike's dating marathon during the holidays. FYI: By carefully scheduling his time, he was able to have a date with everyone on his list (or shall I say "our list") excepting Diana Axford (Wright Hanks' granddaughter) who was out of town. In order to accomplish this amazing feat, Mike had dates for breakfast, lunch, and dinner as well as attending a New Year's Eve party, going sledding, and going to a Jazz game courtesy of some dental products company. Today he is enroute via Amtrak to Iowa. The 30-hour trip both coming and going has been a drag but I think he feels encouraged since he was very impressed with several of the girls he dated. Perhaps this is the proper time to extend thanks to all siblings who encouraged, lined-up, fed, bedded, and in any other way helped him these past few weeks. Thanks to Becky and Stephani who scouted out some wonderful girls and lined things up for him. Thanks for the phone calls and encouragement and late-night talks. And thanks also to Grandma Richards who was a half-way house and assisted with the transfer of cars and keys. When we returned last night from Salt Lake, I felt relieved that Mike was en route home, my car was in the garage, and Tim was on his way to Provo. Now just Paul, Jenny, and Beth are left and they will fly out Wednesday. Thanks also to them for hosting Tim yesterday and Mike on New Year's Day. Both commented on how much fun they had with the Cutlers and how sweet everyone was to them.

Weather permitting, school will start tomorrow. SaraKay is worried that there will be a snow closure and she is more than ready to get back. I am anxious to begin my new venture of being home. In regards to that I am going to try to get my parents' Pakistan and missionary journals typed up.

Chet flew out yesterday for Korea. He was due to arrive this afternoon. Becky and kids are on their

own for the next few weeks with Becky trying to liquidate the house, two cars, furnishings, and other things. I'm sure this is going to be one of those experiences that you look back on and say, "I'm glad I'll never have to do that again!" but I feel like this is the chance of a lifetime and that after the next month is over, life won't be so hectic and they can be reunited again. Our prayers are with all of them.

[Dad] It was truly a special time during the holidays to have the stream of family coming and going. As a result, we feel that we have had special times with each of you--good visits, fun games, great conversations, and wonderful food (thanks to Mom).

Yesterday was full of driving--going to SLC to visit with Grandma Ilene and to get the Olds that Mike had been using all week and to bring it home. On the way down, the roads were pretty bad until Inkom, then pretty good until we got into Utah where it was snowing lightly. On the way back, it was clear for much of the way and snowy weather from about Malad on home. We were blessed with safety and had a good visit with Ilene.

On December 31st, I was involved most of the day with meetings with one of the guys I supervise. I fired him and then helped him to pack up and to get moved out of the Idaho Falls office. Not a pleasant experience, but in the long run the best for both him and the council. For the next little while I will have to cover for many of the meetings and assignments he had and hope to quickly find someone to take his place.

On New Year's Eve we went to the bi-stake youth dance. It seems like youth dances are going the way of sports programs around here--gradually dying. The kids that were there had a great time and plenty of pizza to eat--it is just hard to know how to get kids to take advantage of these opportunities for good clean fun rather than many of the private parties that you are not sure what they are doing.

January 12, 2004

[Mom] It's sunny and cold outside today. We've had enough snow that although the main roads are cleared off, the rest of the landscape is a winter wonderland. We are due to receive more snow this week. After the first bad storm, before anyone had driven the car in our driveway, Daddy used the snowblower and cleared a path. After the second major storm, SaraKay and I both manned shovels and cleared it again. It's nice to be independent and able to take care of this ourselves.

I assume that most of you are back into your regular routines and things have calmed down a bit. I spent most of last week cleaning out the storage room. It served a double purpose. First, to locate any family history materials, and second, to sort through things and make sure that we are making the best use of our space. As usual, I am finding a box here and there that has been hidden "from before time began." One of my "finds" was a box of tapes that we must have received when Grandpa and AlvaLu moved into the condo. It was full of tapes that Grandma Barbara had collected. Some are of family members performing, of missionary Christmas tapes, and quite a few are of Grandpa Larsen's speeches given at various occasions.

As I visited with Grandma Ilene this past week, she mentioned that on Christmas Eve she was at Kathy's and shared some of her memories of their Christmas in Pakistan. Lane and Leslie were there and Lane asked if she had recorded the memories. She responded that she had them all in her journals. He asked about the journals and she told him that I had them in my possession. He said that his expertise is in the area of formatting books and that if we could get the information typed up, he would format it and help compile it.

Later, when Paul called and offered to help with the typing, Jenny mentioned that her Grandfather Johnson has a scanner that will take slides and transfer them to a disk. I have over 200 slides of their experiences and I had thought that I needed to get them all developed in order to include them in the book but Jenny thinks it can be done without the cost of development. I am going to check into this. Anyway, I am making a beginning and hoping that I can make some strides on both mine and Dad's family history projects.

It has been nice to be home. Each day is like a gift. I appreciate Daddy's loving support and his willingness to live on less so that I can pursue these projects. He is so busy and gone a lot, but I think he feels like he is doing a great job with his responsibilities and finds satisfaction in both his work and church duties. SaraKay said that she wrote a family letter this morning telling about her hoop shooting experiences yesterday. It was fun to be a part of it. The amazing thing is that she never practices. She has hardly picked up a basketball since her season ended. Maybe that is her secret

to success: she isn't nervous because it isn't a big deal.

Becky has had a pretty big week as a single mom. Her in-laws arrived Friday evening and spent the weekend with her. It gave her a much-needed break from the rigors of little kids and packing. We are trying to be available, too. We have brought all the MozartMath stuff here and I'm trying to get set up to handle that for her. Fortunately, Chet calls often and he feels like already he is seeing some progress with the problems he was sent over there to correct.

P.S. News from last night's chat: Paul and Jenny are expecting a baby the first week in September! Congratulations! Mike is focusing on two sweet young ladies he met over the holiday. Both would make wonderful additions to our family. John is going on a week-long recruiting trip to Utah in two weeks. He has scheduled to spend time with Tim and also the Logan (USU) bunch and we are trying to figure out a way to get him up here, too. Becky will be flying to Korea to look for housing at the end of this month. Randy and Shauntel are still in the throes of deciding about his next course of action: private practice vs. research. Shauntel says that Arch is in the "demolition" stage of his life.

[Dad] Yesterday was a big day of meetings and interviews--a rewarding day--I love my Church service!! I know I am going to miss my high profile job when the Stake Presidency is reorganized in about a year. It was fun to watch SaraKay at the hoop shoot yesterday--she maintains such an outward appearance of calm in the midst of the pressure.

Work has been very demanding this week. I am currently servicing the needs of four districts, but thoroughly enjoying the relationships and successes I am having. We offered the vacant position to a young man that just graduated from BYUI and he will start on the 15th. I will have to stay pretty close to him and train him over the next few weeks.

January 20, 2004

[Mom] There used to be a popular song that had the lyrics, "What a difference a day makes, twenty-four little hours." I thought about that recently when I arrived home and found a message on my answering machine from Shauntel informing us that Randy had received word back on his resumes and that he was interviewing with Twin Falls, Brigham City, and the University of Utah and that they would be in the Salt Lake area this next weekend.

As you can imagine, I felt like Christmas had come eleven months early! We know that there are still a lot of considerations regarding the decision, but we can't help but be encouraged. Their plans are still ambiguous, but we will be able to visit for a few hours with them on Saturday at Steph's. Since SaraKay has her district hoop shoot competition and Daddy has his yearly District Recognition Banquet, they won't be making the trip with us, but Becky and kids and I will leave Saturday morning and spend part of the day at Steph's.

John is flying in on Friday evening to do recruiting for Ford and will join us in Logan. His plans include spending Friday night with Steve and Bonnie and Saturday with us at Steph's. On Sunday he will stay in Provo, and has invited Tim to spend the evening and night with him at the hotel and have lunch with him on Monday between appointments. Tim has been thrilled with the chance for some one-on-one.

We appreciate Steph's willingness to host. This gathering will also give Becky a chance to say some goodbyes since it will be her last chance to see several of you. She has moved up her departure date to February 13th since their passports came through and selling the house isn't an issue. The last few weeks have been an ordeal and given us all an appreciation for the plight of young widows and divorcees who face the daunting challenge of raising their families alone.

Friday night after Daddy and I attended a Wood Badge meeting, we went to Becky's to pick up SaraKay and we had a few minutes to visit with Becky about the details she is working through prior to leaving. Thank goodness that she and Chet are in daily contact and are even house hunting on the internet.

Several of you have asked how I've enjoyed being a full-time homemaker again. It has been a real treat for me to address some of the projects that have needed to be done. One of the sad things that has happened is that I have not located Grandpa Richards's journals. I called Grandma and she has hunted high and low but to no avail. Grandma is contacting my siblings and asking them to check, too.

Grandpa Larsen has been quite discouraged lately. He’s strengthening but his balance is poor and he can’t get around on his legs without a

strong therapist supporting him with his walker. He receives frequent visits from us as well as Alva Lu and Rick and Terry. Yesterday Karen and Jim and their family spent the day with him and then Rick and Terry took him to dinner. I know that all of us are doing what we can to cheer him up. Please remember him in your prayers.

I visited for a few minutes with Tim yesterday and he sounded optimistic. This week he has three three-hour orientation sessions and then interviews with accounting firms for an internship this summer. He has traditionally done pretty well with his interviews so he is hoping that he can secure a spot.

[Dad] I have been spending a lot of time in the Idaho Falls office and in the three Districts served by my new man--Bennett Dunstan. He is brand new--just graduated from BYU-I the end of December, both he and his wife, and he has a little girl (Alaska) and is expecting a little boy at the end of March. He seems to have a lot of drive and interest.

We are having our annual staff training conference this Thursday and Friday. Instead of going out of town, we are meeting here in Blackfoot at the Shilling House and I have a number of assignments on the agenda for the conference. I am glad to be challenged a little more with my management responsibilities and feel like I'm making a significant contribution.

This week is also the beginning of our ward conferences starting with visits to various families tomorrow night and then as a stake presidency visiting with three of the bishops. We have a two-hour sacrament meeting where we hear from the bishop, several ward members by assignment, and each member of the stake presidency. My talk is about walking by faith.

Dad fell again today. A couple weeks ago he fell in the bathroom and scraped his arms and the side of his head. He has been trying to do some physical therapy; it is sad how little he can do. I am amazed at how much strength he still has in his arms and hands, however. He wants to get out of the ECF but with the extent of the help he needs, I am afraid those days are gone.

The therapy on his throat and swallowing has helped a lot and he doesn't seem to be having as bad a time coughing when he eats. He has had a lot of treats through the holidays and has gained a couple of pounds--1 believe he is at 143 now. I have been so thankful we have gone against the facilities recommendations regarding intubating him. He enjoys his treats and most of his meals.

January 27, 2004

[Mom] This morning at 2:45 I awoke to the sounds of a winter blizzard. I got up and went to the front door to look out. Our front sidewalk had about three inches of new powder and the wind was whipping the falling snow into drifts across our driveway. The thought occurred to me that this weather would wreak havoc on roads and then I turned around and went back to bed. SaraKay and I got up about 7:00 and started getting ready for church. By about 8:30 Daddy returned from his meetings and informed us that all meetings in our stake had been cancelled for the day. Although the wind had stopped and the sun was shining, the area was snowbound.

The past week was harried for Daddy. He had some major responsibilities with the annual council seminar on Thursday and Friday, his District Recognition Banquet last night, and three ward conferences today. Of course, with the snow closure he will have another week to polish up his conference talk and he was happy about that.

Yesterday he took SaraKay to the regional hoop shoot in Blackfoot and watched her bring home a second-place trophy. She made 10 of her 25 shots. In the run-off she made 4 of her 5 shots to win second place. We had mixed emotions about her advancing to state since this year it is in Coeur d'Alene in northern Idaho.

After the hoop shoot Daddy worked on the final preparations for the District Banquet. The turn-out was phenomenal, nearly 300 attended!

Following the program, many people helped with clean-up. Daddy and I started carrying things from the display tables to our van. I worried about falling because the sidewalk was icy and slick. On one of my trips back to the gym someone came running in and informed me that Daddy had fallen down and was hurt. I hurried outside to find Don Scott helping Daddy to the car. Apparently, his feet slid out from under him sideways and he landed full force on his side and then hit the back of his head.

Don said that when he asked Daddy if he was okay, he didn't respond. Within a few seconds Daddy had his wits about him and with help he was able to get up. We came home and I checked for any lacerations or signs of a concussion. We called Bishop Godfrey and he and Troy Goodwin came and administered to him. In visiting with

them following the blessing, Bishop Godfrey recounted that last Sunday he fainted during the night when he got up to the bathroom and had to have eight stitches in the back of his head. We're grateful that Daddy is okay.

Our trip to Logan was fun. We left here about 9:30 and had clear roads both going and coming. Becky's three were good for the entire trip and we arrived at Steph's about 11:30 just a few minutes ahead of Steve and Bonnie and the bunch. Since Randy and Linds weren't due home from skiing for another hour, we went ahead and fed the bunch. Randy's folks from Blackfoot came to see the family about the time Steph received a call that Randy and Linds would be late getting home so Marilyn and Steve left to go visit their son, Taggart, who is a student at USU and came back later. The older kids went sledding on the hill behind Steph's house. Some of us kept Anne Marie, Arch, and Larsen busy playing downstairs during the sledding. About three Becky and I and Steve and Bonnie gathered up our stuff and left for home.

[Dad] Sue covered most of my excitement from Saturday except the fact that my vision was affected from the fall and that was why I requested the priesthood blessing. It was like I was looking through water in my left eye, except for a tunnel of clear vision straight ahead. After the blessing, that phenomenon and my headache gradually disappeared and fortunately, I haven't had any symptoms since. The next day in the sunlight, Sue was able to see the bump on the upper back of my head and a little tissue damage. I also had stretched the muscles of my neck trying to hold my head from hitting and they were sore for a couple of days.

It was nice to have a little breather on Sunday and do home teaching, recommend interviews, and a family meeting with Dad about getting him out of the ECF. After all the discussion, we found that Dad's feelings are that home is with Alva Lu and that he wants to wait until after March 18, when she takes a trip, to see if she is stronger and emotionally able to have him. Gary took notes on our visit, and we also had a caregiver, Susan Morrell, join us for the discussion.

One of the most interesting parts of my presentations at the meetings on Thursday and Friday was the "Blue Vase" award on Thursday night. We showed the video of that story--about a young man that was determined to keep his honor in pursuit of accomplishing a task for his employer at any cost. He was supposed to get a certain blue vase and deliver it at a certain time to the train depot where his boss was leaving for a wedding the next day. He was foiled in his attempts to get the blue vase by misinformation and interference from his immediate supervisors.

But, eventually he was able to get the vase and hired a plane to fly him to his boss's destination and delivered the vase as the train pulled into the station. I came across some blue vases at Michaels that looked just about like the one in the movie and got 15 of them for $2.00 apiece. We had one vase full of flowers as an example and gave each person a vase filled with confetti strips with "I CAN" (the theme of the conference on them and a coupon in the bottom with three goals on. With the accomplishment of those goals, they could take the vase home full of flowers to their spouse. I appreciated Sue's help in putting things together. It was a very successful conference and the blue vase was the highlight.

February 2, 2004

[Mom] I just put on a Daffy Duck video for Maddie, Tate, and Larsen and I thought that it would buy me some time to get this letter written. We have drawn pictures, read Dr. Seuss, played with playdough, played computer games, and decorated sugar cookies, all before lunchtime, so this afternoon is dragging by and I decided to turn on a video and let them enjoy that for a while. They have been good little kids for us.

Yesterday in church they played quietly and hardly made a peep. Larsen struck up a friendship with Steve Reader who was sitting on the opposite end of our bench and spent part of the meeting with him. Larsen has a natural affinity for father figures and continues to follow Daddy all around the house whenever he is home. I wished I had had a camera the other night. Daddy was walking down the hall to the bedroom and Larsen was right on his heels, just waiting for the right moment to petition him for some cuddling time. It was a cute sight!

We are getting along fine and especially appreciate SaraKay's help. Becky has called each day and she has been very impressed with Korea. She said the people are friendly, clean, modest, and honest. The crime rate is very low and she felt safe wherever she went. She and Chet located an apartment which is in a complex that has a grocery store, shops, beauty shop, playground, pool, fitness center, and other amenities. Each apartment is about 1100 sq. ft. They are in the

process of negotiating. She has visited Maddie's school and it has a swimming pool, gym, music, and art programs. The subway will be their main mode of transportation.

I received an email from Aunt Kathy regarding the Richards' reunion the 16th and 17th of July at Bear Lake. Paul and Jenny have about decided to stay in Wisconsin for the summer, Mike only gets two weeks off (July 2-19) and Shauntel and Randy may be moving. He is still hoping to find something that isn't quite so far from home.

Grandma Ilene found Grandpa's Pakistan journal. She said that it was at the back of a file cabinet drawer, under a leather zippered binder. I'm so grateful that it has been found. Several of you who are doing typing have commented on how much you are enjoying the chance to read Grandma's journal. Thanks for helping out.

When I called Paul last night he said that Jenny has been quite sick with this pregnancy. Our prayers are with her and we hope that the nausea will subside when she gets through this first trimester. The first few months of a pregnancy are always so difficult, especially when you are chasing around an 18-month-old besides. Jenny is nearing completion of her project and hopes to have it done by March. That will be a big relief and wonderful accomplishment!

It seems like we've had a lot of special needs in our family these last few months. Many of you are dealing with difficult challenges or heavy demands on your energies and time. May you continue to find strength through prayer, knowing that the Lord is aware of you and will reward your obedience and faith. We love you and pray for your success.

[Dad] Time is sure flying by with our little munchkins here--probably because I can leave and go to work and leave Sue and SaraKay with the kids. I had forgotten how demanding little ones can be and can readily see why it is wise to have your family while you are young and have the health and stamina as well as the emotional flexibility to handle the demands and stress. We have been so grateful for SaraKay and her willingness to help–she has been a lifesaver!!!

Today was a staff meeting in Idaho Falls all day. I am surprised at how much more prepared I am to handle issues that come up than I was a year ago. I know so much more about the other districts under my purview and am grateful for the solidarity of the Blackfoot District.

The Klondike Derby was this weekend and we had a great turnout with nearly 300 Scouts and leaders there in addition to a staff of other leaders and Order of the Arrow helpers. The weather had been really warm and even raining for the last couple of days and then Friday night it turned cold and stayed that way. Saturday morning we retired a flag by respectfully burning it and I played "Taps" while it burned.

Later on, I had a good visit with Dad and then went to a Pinewood Derby for Pack 262 sponsored by the Rotary Club. They had about 40 boys with their cars to race. They had to use the 6th Grade Center gymnasium and had the whole side of the bleachers full. They also have their own sound system and had a guest announcer who was from Channel 6, sold hot dogs and candy during the event, and had an electronic track hooked up to the computer and projected on a large screen showing the winner of each race and how fast the cars had been going (eg. 187.655 miles per hour).

February 11, 2004

[Mom] The countdown is on for Becky's departure. Yesterday the movers arrived and packed for most of the day. Today they loaded the "air" shipment, the "ocean freight" shipment and tomorrow they will complete the storage containers and get it taken to a unit that Becky and Chet will be renting. Although I went with Becky last Friday and helped, we both decided that the most effective plan was for me to take care of the children here while she supervises the packing and takes care of the details necessary to tie up the loose ends before departing the U.S.A. I think last week was the hardest since everything in their house had to be sorted and decisions made regarding just what to take, what to store, and what to discard. It was very helpful for Becky to go to Korea and see their apartment and get a feel for their situation.

Through it all the children have done remarkably well. I know that the blessings given to them shortly after Chet's departure have made a difference. Today it seemed like the dust began to settle a little and the end was in sight. One more day of packing and the movers will be through. Hopefully the next few days will be calm enough that Becky will have the time to complete all the other preparations before they leave from Idaho Falls on Saturday. Chet's folks will meet them in Salt Lake and spend the three-hour layover there with them before they continue on to L.A. where Chet will be waiting. He knew she would not be

able to handle the 16- hour trip alone. Our prayers are with them as they embark on this adventure.

Daddy's work has been pretty intense and he puts in long hours preparing for these district dinners that are held at this time of year. The man that he is supervising is in Texas for a two-week training, so Daddy is covering for him in his districts. He went to the doctor about his knee last week and was told to take it easy and not do anything strenuous. Hopefully that will be the answer and he won't have to have surgery.

February 18, 2004

[Mom] By Wednesday of last week, the movers had finished up and Becky spent the balance of the week here with us. I was grateful because I could tell that Larsen and Tate needed her and the security she provided at this time. It was a relief to know that the house in Idaho Falls was empty and that Becky could focus on getting ready for their flight on Saturday. Of course, there was still a lot to do but at least the biggest part of the move was over.

On Thursday Daddy and I drove to Idaho Falls and after securing the load with a large tarp and rope, we drove the Rodeo home towing the trailer filled with all of Becky and Chet's year's supply of food, paper products, and other essentials. We also brought their treadmill and apple cider mill that they are letting us use in their absence. We called the Hanni boys and they helped us unload and carry the heavy boxes and treadmill downstairs. By the time we were finished, we had half of the game room piled high. It took us several hours to get it organized and on shelves in our storage room.

On Friday Becky brought all seven of the big suitcases upstairs into the dining room and began organizing them and packing them for her flight the next day. She and the kids took a few hours and visited friends in Idaho Falls that afternoon. We did the laundry up one last time and scoured the house for anything we might have forgotten to pack.

Saturday we left for the airport about 2:45 p.m., driving two cars; one for people and the other for luggage. When we arrived, we loaded the suitcases on luggage carts and checked in. Because their tickets were one-way international flights, their luggage had to be searched and so we entertained the kids by pulling them around on a luggage cart for almost a half an hour while the airport personnel searched all eight pieces of luggage using metal and chemical detectors and rummaging through every item. Fortunately, there weren't a lot of people waiting in line and it wasn't as harried as it could have been.

After finally getting the luggage checked in, we sat for a few minutes visiting and then said our goodbyes so that Becky and the kids could get through security before the rush. We tried to hang on to Larsen as long as we could so that Becky could get her shoes on and computer put back in the case, but the minute he was out of our arms he ran through the security checkpoint, past Becky, and got on the escalator before anyone could stop him. The security officer took off running after him and followed him up the escalator to the second floor and then brought him back down to Becky and the kids. As they waved goodbye to us, it was quite a sight with Maddie carrying a backpack almost as big as her, Tate toting a violin case, and Becky with a large diaper bag filled to the brim, a computer case slung over one shoulder and Larsen wailing as she carried him along under her arm. We stood on the other side of the glass partition feeling pretty helpless through it all.

We had heavy hearts as we left the airport, worrying about her making the flight alone. We were grateful that Chet's folks were waiting for her in Salt Lake and would help her get through the layover there before continuing on to L.A.

When they arrived in L.A., they were overjoyed to see Chet. Becky's only regret was that she didn't have her camera along to record the event. She was instructed that the only way to ensure that the camera would arrive in Korea safely was to ship it air freight, so she didn't have it on her. We felt badly that in all the hubbub of their stay with us and departure, we forgot to take some pictures, too.

We received a phone call on Sunday afternoon informing us that they had arrived safely and were settling in. They each had a blanket, a pillow, and clothes, and Becky had packed the porta crib, two pots, a few dishes, and some books and toys. In two weeks, their air freight should arrive and in about a month their ocean freight should be there. What an adventure!

It was a sweet experience for us to have some quality time with the kids these last few weeks. One day as I was trying to get the kids ready to go somewhere, I said to Maddie, "Hurry now and get on your shoes and stockings." She looked at me and she said, "Why do you keep calling them

stockings, Grandma?" I said, "Well, I guess that is what I have always called them. What do you call them?" She replied, "I call them socks." And then she looked at me and said very seriously, "You know, Grandma, you and I don't speak the same language!"

Friday night we got a phone call from Tim. Some friends in Idaho Falls had invited him to go snowmobiling with them in Island Park on Saturday and he was with them at their family cabin and wanted us to pick him up Saturday evening so that he could spend Sunday and Monday with us. We were pleased to get in some time with him over the holiday weekend. He left about 3:30 Monday afternoon for Provo. He is encouraged about his program and feels like he is doing a little better, although he hasn't been successful yet at finding an internship for the upcoming summer.

In closing I would like to share with you a spiritual experience that I had last week. Ever since Chet and Becky decided to move to Korea, I have had people respond to the news in a variety of ways. Some have expressed fears regarding world conditions and others have commented that it sounded like a wonderful cultural adventure. I have tried to stay neutral about it, trusting that they were the ones making the decision and that the Lord would guide them. Well, I guess I was worrying about it more than I realized.

On Wednesday afternoon I laid down to take a short nap and before I fell asleep, I found myself stewing about things. I fell into a troubled sleep and a few minutes later, as I was starting to awaken, I heard the words in my mind, "Go forth to serve." I know it was the Spirit comforting and instructing me. The message was clear. I was not to worry but to recognize that the Lord was aware of them and that they would be a force for good in Korea. (I thought that it was amazing that those four familiar and significant words that have been such an important part of my life these past 25 years would be the ones the Spirit chose to use!)

I mention this experience because it pertains to all of you. It was a reminder to me that the Lord has supported us in our righteous pursuits. You have each had the financial means, the health and capacity to get your schooling and receive training that has prepared you for living productive lives. "Where much is given, much is required." The Lord will use you wherever you may go in building the kingdom and I need to let go and accept that.

[Dad] After reading Sue's letter I can't write or add much because of the water blurring my vision. I have been grateful that we have been able to be there for Becky during the demands of this move. The love and support of each other through times of crisis and the ebb and flow of that support according to changing needs is always reassuring to me. That is one of the benefits of a large family because there is always someone who needs and others who can give as we move through the vagaries of life's challenges.

Monday--President's Day--was a welcome holiday. I did most of the accounting for our taxes. Work has been pretty hectic and demanding and I am glad to have Bennett, my new man, back from his training in Texas all fired up and ready to go. We have the district dinner for the Centennial District tonight and I have had to do everything as far as council support and logistics for that.

Sunday night I ended up being the only one signing recommends and was there for almost two hours and interviewed about twenty people. We were able to get in a good visit with Dad right after his church. For Valentine's Day we went to Jaker's and used a coupon we had received for Christmas. We went there right after getting Becky on the plane. Then we had to hurry back to Blackfoot to get SaraKay to her babysitting job and then drove back to Idaho Falls to get Tim. It was a real treat to have him here for a few hours.

February 25, 2004

[Mom] The last few days have been sunny and relatively warm. Today the weather forecast predicts a heavy snow storm heading our way. When I told SaraKay, she groaned, but then we decided that we would rather have the rest of winter now than have it the middle of April when spring really should be arriving. With our luck, we'll get it now and later. Mind you, I'm not complaining. Our snowpack is just a little above normal and they predict the rivers will run at 80% this season. Whatever that means. On chat Sunday night David was bragging about them spending Saturday out in their yard getting their spring work done. Truly, Boise is a banana belt!

On Friday night we received a phone call from John telling us that Ford has offered him a job in China and will be flying him and Laurel over there to look at the situation before they make their final decision. I want to say that I was happy for him, but this trend toward moving farther away lately has got me worried. I thought the plan was to "gather" and this certainly isn't my idea of

gathering. I have been interested to find out what Randy thought of Virginia Beach/Norfolk and the interview he had there. I guess everything is relative. Virginia isn't as far away today as it was before Korea and China entered the picture. Keep us posted!

We were able to visit with Becky on chat Sunday night. It was Monday morning for her and she was getting the kids going on their day while she typed. Larsen has been sick with the flu (someone on chat casually asked if it was SARS and of course, that was very reassuring) and they took him to the doctor yesterday. The office call was $10 and the three medications cost them $5.00. When I mentioned that to Daddy, he wondered if maybe we shouldn't consider moving to Korea, too. I mailed Becky some clothes the kids left and one package of baking soda, one baking powder, and a bottle of vanilla. She has been unable to get them there. The total weight was 6 pounds and the cheapest they could go was for $30.00 and arrive in two months! I sent them by air which would get them there in 8- 10 days. That cost $50! I don't think we will be sending much back and forth at those rates.

The last two weeks I have had my routine physical exam along with some blood work and a bone density scan. It was at my physical three years ago that they discovered my diseased ovary and I ended up having surgery. Ever since that experience, I approach this time of year with a bit of trepidation. Fortunately, so far, the tests have come back negative or positive, whatever is good, and I'm set for another year (or 50,000 miles, whichever comes first).

On Saturday, Daddy, SaraKay, and I spent the morning at Becky's home in Idaho Falls, finishing up the last of the cleaning and sweeping out the garage. It is in the hands of a good realtor and looks very nice. I spent several hours throughout the week finishing up the cleaning that Becky didn't have time to complete before her departure. Melaleuca is paying me for my time and I enjoyed getting everything shipshape. I did have a bit of nostalgia as I thought of the good times we've had there with them, but I also felt relief that the last of the details regarding the house were taken care of.

[Dad] Last week flew by. Work, Church and home life have been busy and full and I am convinced that the pace of our lives is continuing to pick up. I thought things were supposed to slow down after 60. I have spent a couple days with Bennett, my new man, following up on his training and getting details taken care off.

I have been using a cane most of the time and it seems to have helped my right knee to have a chance to heal. If I can solve the problem without surgery I certainly want to. But I am concerned that I won't be able to ride a bike and walk the trek this summer.

Sunday we had the three ward conference meetings for the wards in Riverside. What wonderful people and sweet spirit we encountered in each meeting!! I really love this association with the people throughout our stake and recognize what a great blessing it is.

Monday night we went to the high school's production of Les Miserables. It was absolutely wonderful!! We were in awe at the number of quality solo voices and the way it all came together. Chad Ruger as Jean Valjean was comparable to a Broadway performance. The depth in other quality voices and performances was truly amazing for a small school like Snake River. We are blessed to have so much talent in this area and the musical was a wonderful showcase for it this year. I think Deanne Casperson's positive attitude has certainly had an impact on the quality of music in our school.

March 2, 2004

[Mom] Daddy left early this morning for a week-long training in California. Not to be outdone, SaraKay and I watched Rocky V for FHE and ate a donut from Kesler's. But although we are having a raucous time, we must admit that Dad leaves a big hole when he's gone and we both miss him already.

Alva Lu left last week for St. George to take care of business and visit family, and then she and her siblings are going on a vacation together. The first few days after she left, Grandpa was pretty sad but he has perked up and we've had some good visits with him. Last week Karen came to see him and Staff flew in for some time with him this past weekend. Rick, Gary, and Daddy and I all try to get in to see him regularly and the occasional visits from family who are distant really brighten his day.

Grandma Ilene is in good health and seems to be in good spirits despite the long, cold winter. Last Saturday, Wright came with his daughter who was visiting family in Provo, and they had an enjoyable time together, despite being cooped up with the blizzard that hit that day.

Stephani has been on the run with the kids and music, scouts, school, and other commitments. She is taking an institute class at USU and has thoroughly enjoyed it. Katie got word that she had been selected as 3rd chair in the Honors Band and Sam's essay won him the right to participate in a day-long writers' activity for promising young authors.

Shauntel and Randy are still debating the pros and cons of private practice vs. nighthawking. For those who don't know, nighthawking is working from a home computer, reading x-rays for hospitals throughout the U.S. who contract with a company to provide them with a radiologist. Randy would have greater flexibility, freedom, and pretty much be able to carry a caseload suited to his desires. They are leaning toward the nighthawk job. It would be seven days on, seven off. The drawback is that he works at night. But, given the other pluses, they feel like they could adjust to this. Their contract in St. Louis is finished on June 30th.

Bonnie was going to come last Saturday and spend a few hours with us and then visit her sister Shannon who has a beautiful new home down by the river. By Friday night the weather turned ugly, and by morning storm warnings were in effect for here and all points south. Although we were disappointed, we were relieved to know that they were safe at home instead of out on the roads in the storm.

Dave and Andrea are enjoying spring weather in sunny Boise. Laurel and Andrea have both been involved in some musical programs. We are hoping to make a trip to Boise and spend a few days with them around Easter.

Becky and Chet are still (impatiently) awaiting the arrival of their air freight. Becky found some English-speaking friends and is beginning to meet people in their branch. Yesterday was a holiday and they went to a nearby amusement park for part of the day. Her biggest challenge is feeding her family with the limited supply of foods that she is accustomed to cooking with.

I appreciated Laurel's letter. It helped so much to have her explain the situation they would be living in and the city in China.

Mike is driving with two friends from Iowa for spring break and will have a chance to see both Brook and Marci again. He has kept touch with them both and hopes that spending a little more time with them will give him a chance to get better acquainted.

Jenny doesn't say much in her weekly letters, but she has felt pretty rotten for several weeks now and is hoping for a reprieve from the morning sickness when she passes the first trimester mark. It sounds like she is making progress on her thesis and we're grateful that it is coming together for her.

Tim called Sunday and said that this semester isn't nearly as difficult as the last one. He feels like he is doing fairly well and also enjoys playing on his ward's intramural team. His favorite thing is basketball and he usually gives us a play-by-play account of their games.

SaraKay is preparing for violin and piano festivals coming up in the next few weeks. She went skiing with the school last week and spoke in church Sunday. She has been attending choir with me and it's been fun to sing alto with her. She is getting pretty good with hearing the part.

Dad's pace continues to be frenetic. He has felt a small improvement in his knee after using his cane faithfully and hopes that maybe he can beat this thing without surgery. He called from the airport to say that his cane enabled them to get through security sooner. Special concessions for disabled, I guess.

Saturday evening Staff dropped in unexpectedly after spending the day snowmobiling with Gary and then visiting with Grandpa at the care center. He is able to fly free on standby since Jimmy works for an airline and then he catches the shuttle from the airport to Blackfoot. He gave us an update on their family. Jennifer has nearly completed her nursing requirement to get licensed in Arizona and has a job lined up. Matt is in Hawaii and keeps good contact with the family. Chris is living in Rexburg and lays carpet for a living. He is dating a lovely girl and the family is hoping it will lead to marriage. Cocoa has just interviewed for a management position with the company she has been working for in Vegas. If she gets the job, she will be relocating to California. It would be a wonderful career step for her. Jimmy and Angel live in Tucson and are in the process of building a new home.

March 11, 2004

[Mom] It's a cold but sunny morning and the promise of spring is in the air. Our snow has almost all melted off and the weatherman said that this week will be a pleasant one. This

morning when I walked at the stake center, Sue Beasley reported that they made a trip to Boise over the weekend and that the weather there was beautiful. The crocuses were about six inches tall and it was warm enough that they went for a walk by the river and didn't even need jackets. Now I know why David wasn't on chat last night. He was outside enjoying the sunshine!

It's good to have Daddy home after a five-day absence. He arrived refreshed and excited about the things he learned at his seminar. He was able to give his knee a rest since most of the time was spent sitting in classes and he feels like it's improving.

My life has settled into a regular routine and I'm hoping to finish up my inside projects so I can be ready for the yard when things dry up and finish melting off. I try to get in to see Grandpa most weekdays. He usually gets quite a bit of company on the weekends and so it works well for me to see him when he’s not so busy.

Probably the bad news of the week is that Mike's ride to Logan fell through Saturday and he has been scrambling the last few days trying to find another way. It is so late to be booking flights for this weekend that they run from $600-$1500 and that is just too pricey. Last night he found some that were leaving Omaha and Chicago, but they were still too much. He is trying to find someone who might be willing to ride with him but that search has come up empty, too. This morning we are trying John's travel agency, Discount Global Travel and seeing if they can do any better. If Mike's ride would have given him even a few more days’ notice, it wouldn't be such a challenge to find a cheaper flight, but as it is, the flights are full. I'm going to call him tonight again to see how he's getting along. Update: He called last night to say that Marci found a stand-by ticket out of Omaha for him. If he can get on the flight he will, but if not, he will drive it.

Bonnie and her oldest three dropped in Saturday morning to visit and have lunch with us before going to her sister, Shannon's, to see her new home. She was going to stop in Pocatello on her return trip and visit with Joel and Kim and tour their new home. We really enjoyed the chance to see them again. Nate arrived in his cub scout shirt and looked so handsome with all his badges, buttons, ropes, and beads. He also brought his scout book just in case there was time for us to work with him on some projects. I guess this love of scouting is genetic. He is taking full advantage of the scouting program they have in their ward.

The kids are all getting so grown up. It seems like only yesterday that they were all preschoolers! Rachel is enjoying school and reads on a ninth-grade level. Nate is Mr. Popular and has lots of friends wherever he goes. Chrissy is in first grade and already has some "romantic interests" among her classmates. Bonnie was telling us that Jared has gone through a time of requesting certain nicknames and refusing to answer to “Handsome” or “Cute.” Some of his choices are "Cool" and "Awesome" and so the whole family has to adjust to his new name.

Visiting with Bonnie about their family reminded me of my experiences as a young mother. It's one of life's greatest pleasures to see our children grow up and to share and nurture the process. Although the demands are sometimes overwhelming, the days are full of the unexpected and occasionally, the sublime.

We're grateful that Jenny is feeling better. I can empathize with her. Those first few months of pregnancy were always an endurance test for me and I was grateful to hit the three-month mark and feel human again.

We appreciate everyone's efforts to keep touch and be supportive of each other. On chat Sunday there was a lot of love and support flowing Mike's way as he mentioned some of his travails and challenges. It didn't stop there. I received phone calls from several of you offering help and it has been very heartwarming. There is a song, "That's What Friends Are For." I've had that on my mind these past few weeks as some in the family have faced some challenges and the family has been mobilized to help. "That's What Families are For."

[Dad] Last week was a great change of pace. I was at the Radisson Hotel in Newport Beach, Orange County, CA. It is just a few minutes away from the John Wayne Memorial Airport. I thought that it would be great to be in CA during this cold season of the year, but I was sadly mistaken. It was so cold and they didn't have central heating and kept the air conditioning going anyway, so I ended up wearing my jacket most of the time.

The class I was in was small--just ten of us--and I had known two of them from previous trainings. A major part of the class was evaluating and learning from a survey of leadership styles and skills taken by my boss, his boss, two peers and two subordinates prior to the class and scored by

a national firm. It was quite enlightening and I was upset with the results initially, but came to understand and put things into perspective and learn from it. There were additional exercises where we worked together in groups of two or five and discussed concepts relevant to our management experiences and the environment we work in. In addition, time was spent on the process of interviewing, selecting, hiring, and firing, as well as the system of critical achievements and quarterly reviews.

On Thursday, we took the afternoon off and went to the sea base operated by the council that was just completing a six-million-dollar renovation and building project. It was wonderful and I couldn't help thinking how different it was to have a camp on the sea vs. in the woods like our camps. They have a lot of small crafts and even a schooner like in "Master and Commander" that the kids learn to sail. Then we drove to Balboa Island, took the ferry across to Balboa peninsula and Balboa beach. I walked in the sand, briefly walked in the ocean, and then went to Ruby's at the end of the pier and had a milkshake. We then went to a large mall and had dinner at Crazy Horse. It was great to have that break and to get a flavor of Orange County.

Much of the weekend was then spent in trying to work things through with Dad and Alva Lu. I regret that she has interpreted our efforts at advocacy for him as family vs. her. We certainly didn't expect any compromise in her care or concern for her health and well-being. We did hope to be able to work out a compromise situation where Dad would be able to get out of the sterile environment of the rest home and to enjoy the dignity of a home during his remaining time. This whole process has been emotionally draining and time consuming and it doesn't appear to me that an equitable solution will ever be reached. Your continuing cards, notes, and pictures are certainly appreciated by Dad.

March 16, 2004

[Mom] Mike and Marci are arriving tomorrow and will probably leave Thursday to go to Provo to spend some time with Tim. We are excited to get to meet her.

We really appreciate the Logan bunch taking care of Mike while he was there. He spent Saturday evening with Brooke and Steve and Bonnie, and then drove to Steph's and spent the day with them and Brooke for Sunday. As usual, they all went out of their way to make him feel welcome.

Last night on chat Shauntel mentioned that they might be moving to Logan in July if Randy gets his offer. It doesn't seem possible that after so many years away, they could actually live within driving distance. I'm trying not to get my hopes too high until I know it's really going to happen, but it would be wonderful to have them around.

Yesterday I visited Grandpa Larsen and attended his church services. It was a sweet experience. It is so heart-warming to recognize just how much the Lord loves all his children and how he provides the opportunity for them to continue in church activity right up until the end. There was a resident who was sitting on the other side of Grandpa who was one of the few who was singing the hymns. She really sang out and I imagined that over the years she has loved music and appreciates the opportunity to continue to sing. It was sweet, when following a solo that was performed, one of the residents broke into applause. I didn't blame her; I had felt the same enthusiasm for the number.

[Dad] Yesterday was a red-letter day as I spent time on both the treadmill and the stationary bike along with my usual round of exercises and got a full hour in without paying with a lot of pain for the rest of the day. My knee is getting much better!

At work we are focusing on Friends of Scouting, fundraising, and getting ready for recruiting and organizing new units for the spring membership thrust. I am enjoying my role as a District Director much more this year, now that I know my job better. Last week I spent a day in Teton and Star Valley districts with Dave Palmer and just half a day with Bennett, plus some phone follow through with him. Blackfoot is doing well--we had a great Roundtable, are getting signups for our Merit Badge Pow Wow, recruiting new people to the District staff, and looking toward a Spring Camporee in May. The wards have done well with their Friends of Scouting and we are at 91% of our fair share with the objective of reaching 100% by the end of the month. Last week I spent a couple hours with my immediate supervisor, Mike Marchese, and he was more complimentary and positive about the job I am doing than I have ever heard him. Needless to say, it felt good.

This coming Sunday is the day for ward conference for the wards in the stake center–Moreland 6th and Moreland 3rd. We are also having a stake youth fireside that night and I am trying to prepare a talk for that fireside focused on personal initiative in pursuing Personal Progress,

Eagle, and Duty to God. We also have the ward visits on Wednesday night to designated individuals chosen by the wards.

Last week we had a modesty night sponsored by the Stake YW and I helped with the logistics and support for that. It was a wonderful evening, and with skits, video interviews with many young men at the high school, and modeling, it helped to get across the importance of proper choices in their attire, makeup, and appropriate piercings. SaraKay was in the skit and demonstrated gothic with black clothes, a tattoo on one arm, pink spiked hair, etc. She really enjoyed getting into that role and wanted to wear her (fake) tattoo to school the next day under a long-sleeved shirt so she could show some of her key friends.

(Letter from Karen Vanfleet)

Today was the family meeting with Layne VanOrden. In attendance was Dad, Steve, Gary, Mark, Rick, and I. Layne's office was pretty full with all of us there. Layne did not discuss anything with us without Dad's permission. He shared with us much more information about Dad's estate than I believe is generally known among the kids without divulging specifics–which was fine with me.

I will briefly summarize the estate. It consists of three trusts: The Marital Trust, The Family Trust, and The Allan and Alva Lu Larsen Trust. The Marital Trust consists primarily of the yearly dividends from Rocky Mountain Machinery, proceeds from the granary, and something else (help me, Steve!) (Sorry, I got there late and didn't hear this detail–but I think the Moreland home was originally in this trust). The Family Trust includes proceeds from the farm (but I thought that was all dispersed?) (the second sale of the farm was for $600,000 and $280,000 or $40,000 apiece was distributed at that time) and other stuff. The Allan and Alva Lu Larsen Trust includes the two homes and annuities that go to Alva Lu at Dad's death for her care.

The Family Trust became active at Mom's death. It is the trust that 51% goes to the church at Dad's death and the remaining 49% is divided among the children. (It is an irrevocable trust and cannot be changed.) The Marital Trust was changed just last year so that all of the proceeds would be divided among the children (rather than the 51/49% split like the Family Trust). (Dad actually has access to both of those trusts–primarily the interest, but also principal if necessary for his health, maintenance, and support.) The joint trust will go to Alva Lu for her care and welfare at Dad's death. (And as I understand it--upon her death, it will be divided between the children of both marriages.) (We also discussed the reason for Alva Lu being in St. George. At the time of the purchase, the St. George home was titled in Dad & Alva Lu's name as joint tenants and it needed to be changed over into the name of the Allan & Alva Lu Trust. The original titling would have given the home to Alva Lu and her family upon Dad's death. With the change, we share in the proceeds upon Alva Lu's death.)

Throughout their marriage, Dad and Alva Lu have taken out $40,000 each year for their living expenses. Otherwise, the trusts have remained untouched. They have saved, and any additional expenses have been paid for out of this amount. They live relatively frugally. Currently, around $5,000 a month is paid out of the Family Trust for Dad's care at the Nursing Home. Layne felt that this protected the kid's assets more to spend down the Family Trust first than the Marital Trust. Layne further stated that there would be money to take care of Dad no matter what Dad wanted. (Layne also stated that he reviews the statements on all the trust's monthly and periodically reviews with Gary Meikle, the attorney to make sure everything is being done in compliance with the provisions of the trusts and according to Dad's will. He reaffirmed his friendship with Dad over the years and his desire to see that Dad's desires are met. The change in the Marital trust was at his suggestion in order to maximize the benefit to us kids. The payment of Dad's ECF costs from the Family trust was also a measure to benefit us. Both of those moves benefit us at the expense of the church which has been okayed by Dad.)

We mentioned our concerns about Julene and breaching confidentiality in calling her mother when Layne's office was called to arrange an appointment with the family. Layne said he would talk to her about it. We all agreed that someone needed to call Alva Lu to let her know of this meeting. I felt this alleviated a lot of concerns about misappropriation of funds and allegations about Alva Lu. I felt the meeting stayed on target regarding what is best for Dad.

Next, we all went to Steve's office to discuss things further that were not in Layne's purview. We discussed different housing arrangements: ramifications of him going back to Idaho Falls, different individuals looking at homes in Blackfoot, etc. We also discussed that we would like Dad to have keys, a wallet with a credit card

and some cash and a vehicle for his disposal. We all agree that Alva Lu cannot physically care for Dad and understand her feelings about not wanting someone 24 hours a day under her roof. We need to learn more about options and see if there is some way to make things work.

Later, Dad expressed to Rick and me his concern about Alva Lu. We asked what he was concerned about. He said that he wanted her to be happy. He remains adamant that he is not happy where he is now. After Rick left, Dad told me that he wished he had said more. I asked him what he would have said. He said that he would have told everyone how much he appreciated their support.

I called Alva Lu on the way home and had a very nice visit with her on the phone. I told her about the meeting and how it clarified things. I told her it stayed positive. She said that she hoped it helped and that she has felt like the family was against her. I did not say anything to her about Julene. She clarified a few things for me that I appreciated knowing. We all know that Dad likes to keep things private and that he has been militant and combative in more visits than not with Alva Lu when we aren't there. She said it meant a lot to her to hear that Dad wants her to be happy. She tells him that she won't visit him if he talks to her like that, but that it doesn't help. She has been under enormous strain and is not recovering from her surgery like she should. That is why she is in St. George. She said it has still been very stressful.

I was more encouraged after that conversation with her than I have been in a long time. I know that when you back an animal into a corner, they are going to bite back. I believe that when you push people, they instinctively want to push back. I would like to believe that if we can look for options that work with Alva Lu's needs instead of fighting against them, we can win her cooperation. Today, she seemed amenable to the possibility. She wasn't on the defensive. I forewarned her that change was in the wind, but that Dad wouldn't be leaving the rest home on 4/1 like he told her yesterday on the phone.

I guess that is about it. And you know what? I called Dad on his phone at the rest home about 3 this afternoon and he picked it right up. I was able to tell him a little about my visit with Alva Lu and that I had arrived home safely. He also told me that his throat therapy with Sedina is done; that she has taught him everything he needs to know, that he is swallowing things properly and that he can speak at about 100 decibels when he tries. So that was encouraging also. Love, Karen

March 23, 2004

[Dad] I was able to get out for a short bike ride this morning and it felt so good. My knee must be healing well because it didn't cause me any discomfort, but it was a short stint of five miles. The past several days I have been really sick with flu-like symptoms--diarrhea, stomach cramps, vomiting, fever, etc. Friday I even stayed home from work and slept in between toilet breaks. Saturday afternoon I didn't feel like it, but I cleaned the garage and took the plastic off the patio door. It was a good thing with the company we had--which Sue will probably write about.

Sunday was our last round of ward conferences--Moreland 6th and Moreland 3rd. I still didn't feel very well but toughed it out. We had wonderful meetings and everyone felt uplifted and edified by the conference meetings. The conclusion of our conferences was a stake youth fireside Sunday night. We pretty much filled the chapel and each member of the stake presidency spoke. It was a great meeting and no one wanted to leave after it was over. I was supposed to encourage the youth to take more initiative in pursuing Eagle, Duty to God, and Personal Progress. It was fun to share some of my memories of achievements, leaders, and memories of teenage years and show my Eagle, Silver Explorer, and Duty to God awards. Hopefully throughout the talk they were able to get the message of how important and "chosen" they are to be here and now to run the anchor leg of the relay. The value of the jewelry and awards is in what they become as they pursue those recognitions item by item. The important thing is what they become as a result of their efforts rather than what they do. I guess that is true for all of us!

[Mom] We had a big week last week with Mike and Marci arriving on Tuesday and staying until Thursday. I had known for several weeks that they would be coming for a visit so I was able to arrange my schedule to have the time to spend with them. We were so impressed with Marci. She is a lovely young woman and so easy to have around. On Wednesday we went to the temple together and had lunch in the cafeteria, Dad's treat. That afternoon they went to the movie, "The Miracle" and arrived home early evening. I left about eight to pick up SaraKay from orchestra practice and when I returned, Mark and Rita were here visiting with Mike and Marci. They were in

town for the Larsen family meeting on Wednesday and dropped by to visit. It was fun to have them since we had scheduled a rousing game of Apples to Apples for our night's activity and adding them to the mix really made it fun.

Following the game, we visited for a while and they gave us an update on their plans. They had spent part of Wednesday with a realtor, looking for a home. They are ready for a change and are looking for a home with some land and a private but attached apartment for Rita's parents and eventually for Jessica as she becomes more independent. Real estate is so pricey in the Denver area that they are considering making a move to Idaho where their dollar will buy more. We would love to have them closer!

Thursday morning Mike took Marci out to see the farm and they got permission to go into the cellar and see the spuds. There were some Mexicans there getting potatoes and it was fun for them to be able to visit with them in Spanish. When they got home, we spent some time with the old photo albums looking at some of the pictures we took during our time working with the Spanish investigators. Shortly after lunch they left for Provo. I haven't had much of a chance to visit with Mike since he got back to Iowa, but I think he is continuing the relationship. I know that she is flying to Iowa in a few weeks and that will give them a little more time together.

On Thursday night Chad brought Grandma Richards here on his way through to his home in Alpine. The $100,000,000 resort he built in Jackson is the object of a lawsuit by the owners who are refusing to pay the last $15,000,000 they owe Jacobsen's and the company is taking them to court. Because of Chad's involvement as the construction manager, his assignment for the next year and a half is to work with the company's lawyers in going through all the paperwork and building a case. Chad has been driving back and forth from Wyoming to SLC each week and putting in four ten-hour days and then returning to his home on the weekends. He offered to bring Mom for the weekend and we were delighted to have her here. The only problem we ran into was that Daddy came home really sick on Thursday and was very ill for the next two days. We kept Daddy in one end of the house and Grandma in the other end and I'm happy to report that when Grandma left yesterday for home, she was still well and happy.

I can't take all the credit for the "happy" as she spent several hours on Friday and Saturday with Wright Hanks and they went to lunch both days and then joined us here Saturday night for a family dinner. Deniece, Carolee, Bradley (SaraKay's heartthrob), Christine and Marie and their little ones joined us as well as Daddy, SaraKay, and me. It was a beautiful spring day and the kids played frisbee while the rest of us visited.

On Sunday Daddy toughed it out, giving two great speeches and doing all the other things required at the two ward conferences he attended. By late afternoon he was pretty tired, but grateful that he had been well enough to fulfill his duties.

One of the things Grandma and I did while she was here was to go through the Pakistan slides and have her identify them. I took notes of her comments and even got a few extra stories that we will need to include in the history we write of their experiences. I still have about 75 slides left, but I was grateful that we had the time to do some family history during her short stay.

I loved the pictures Jenny and Paul sent of their Chicago trip. Daddy and I both had the same sweet response when we saw all those cute grandkids together! Love to all.

March 29, 2004

[Mom] It's a beautiful spring day and I'm hoping to spend most of it outside working in the yard. Our weekend was hectic, but fun. Friday morning SaraKay had her wisdom teeth pulled. (That wasn't the fun part!) When she had her regular dental check-up a few weeks ago, she mentioned to Dr. Hatch that her mouth ached and he did a Panorex and discovered that the wisdom teeth were creating pressure on the back molars. Although they hadn't erupted and had no roots, it was recommended that they be removed. The surgery took about an hour and then she spent the balance of the day at home. She had lots of friends call to wish her well and some came with jello to cheer her. The biggest problem I had was convincing her to take it easy since she felt pretty good.

Mark, Rita, and Jessica arrived early afternoon and Jessica spent some time with us while her parents visited with Brent Harper about building them a home. They had previously met with Bob Despain who is also a builder and looked at some building lots which are in the Riverside First Ward. The area is along the Snake River but high enough

that there is no problem with flooding. The lots are nearly an acre and in a beautiful new subdivision that is about two miles from Blackfoot.

Following spending some time with Brent, they got Grandpa from the Care Center and brought him here for dinner. We had decided to use our gas grill to cook our famous chicken recipe and Daddy arrived home about 5:30 to get the meat started. The weather had been wonderful most of the week, but on Friday it was cold and blowing and so he ended up putting the grill in the garage instead of on the back patio. Following dinner we cleared away the dishes and played Apples to Apples.

When Mark and Rita were here a couple weeks ago we played the game with them and Mike and Marci and it had been so fun that they decided to buy a game for themselves. It was one that we all could enjoy. It took Grandpa a while to get the gist of what was going on, but we knew he understood when he played the card "Hillary Rodham Clinton" for the clue word "Unhealthy," and the words "Baked Potato" for the clue word "Important." We all got a good laugh out of those contributions! After completing one game we asked Grandpa if he was getting tired, but he commented that he wanted to play a couple more rounds before Mark and Daddy took him back.

Saturday morning SaraKay and I attended the stake Relief Society's annual Humanitarian Day at the stake center. I worked with a group making patchwork quilt tops and SaraKay and our neighbor, Hillary, painted children's blocks for most of the morning. It was heart-warming to see the gym full of women working on a wide range of charitable projects and realize the good that they would do. The stage area was full of displayed quilts donated by the various wards as well as materials for baby layettes such as receiving blankets, burp cloths, and nighties. One ward had donated over 100 large receiving blankets! Elaine McNair, the coordinator for the 5th ward, said that she was given flannel by the stake for 25 blankets and the sisters in her ward took that flannel home, made the blankets and then continued donating until they reached the 100 mark.

One sweet story she told me had to do with blankets donated by Kanae Leavitt whose youngest son was killed in an accident. She brought two beautiful blankets to Elaine and told her that the fabric for the blankets was some that she had purchased a couple years ago to make an outfit for her son. Following his death, she hung on to the fabric, unable to let go of what it symbolized. After some agonizing, she took the precious fabric and made up the blankets and lovingly donated them to the cause. Pretty touching.

By the time we finished up it was nearly 1:30 and we returned to find Mark and Rita just leaving for Colorado. Their original plan was to leave earlier but they had gone to see a home Brent Harper had recently finished building and to talk to the owners. They are pretty committed to getting this move made, but they know it will take a while because they are going to need to get their home in Thornton ready to put on the market and sold. We are thrilled that they will be closer and know it will work well for them since JoEllen is in Rexburg and Jet and Josh are in Twin Falls and will probably be settling in the area.

Saturday afternoon we retrieved Becky and Chet's Rodeo and brought it here to be serviced. It gave us some nostalgic feelings to see their empty house! I received an email this morning from Becky saying that their shipment had arrived and would be delivered today! Wonderful! I appreciate the updates from her and Jenny and Laurel. It's a great way to record your family history for posterity!

Saturday night SaraKay and I attended the Jr. Miss Program at the high school. It was the first one she had been to and there was standing room only. She failed to take some painkillers before leaving at 6:30 and the program lasted until 11:00. By the time I got her home, she was really miserable and I wondered if she would be able to attend her Sunday meetings. Fortunately, by the next morning, she was feeling pretty good. Today she went to school, looking a little like a chipmunk and with a pocket full of pills. We'll see how she gets along.

Last night on chat we had everyone but Jonie and Tim. Becky only came on for about 15 minutes since her friend was picking her up to show her where she could buy cocoa. We asked Paul and Jenny if Kathrine, Jenny's sister, enjoyed the date she had on Friday night with Tim. (He had a great time!) But, the siblings decided that no one would tell Tim if Katherine had a good time unless he tuned in next Sunday evening to chat to find out for himself. (Besides, no one had talked to Katherine and knew anyway.) Other great news is that Tim has a job prospect for the next year doing internal auditing on campus. This past month he

has been helping students with their tax returns and has thoroughly enjoyed that opportunity.

[Dad] Not much news for me to add. I had originally had this week approved for vacation, but we may need to trade some time for the end of June to help Shaunnie and Randy move. So, I worked today and had a pretty good day. I also had my quarterly blood draw to check my Hemoglobin A1C for diabetes monitoring and will meet with the doctor tomorrow for my checkup. I finished pruning the apple trees (started on Saturday and got 1 2/3 done), and trimmed up the other trees, our windbreak, and the shrubs along the ditch between us and Hanni's. I think this is a record--I haven't ever had the pruning done before the end of March before.

Sunday was a standard batch of meetings and then choir, recommend signing, home teaching and being home taught, and working in a visit with Dad. He was really upbeat and happy and we had a sweet visit. He needed me to fix his '53 Chevrolet pickup so I brought it home to work on.

April 14, 2004

[Dad] My hands are still cold from my bike ride this morning and I can hardly type. We finally made our Christmas visit to Boise. I had forgotten what a long ride it is to Boise, compared to SLC. It was great to be able to have a little time with Dave and Andrea and their family. They have done some great things with their yard and decorating and painting their home. The colors set off the spaces and warm up the rooms. It was good to go to church with them and get compliments on how much people appreciate and love them.

The highlight of the trip was the special Easter program on Sunday night sponsored by the Eagle Stake. They had a full orchestra and a wonderful choir. Andrea played flute with the orchestra. They had recruited a lot of participants who were not LDS and promoted the program in all the community. The stake center was almost full and I'm sure it was rewarding for everyone involved in planning and carrying it out. There was one number performed by a children's chorus and Laurel sang a solo as a part of it. She was so composed and sang so beautifully--we were glad to be there for her. The orchestra and chorus sounded a lot like the orchestra on Temple Square and the Tabernacle Choir. There was a lot of wonderful talent exhibited.

On second thought, the highlight of the trip was being able to spend time with Dave and Andrea and to play with their kids and feel the spirit in their home. Chantelle was sick and recovering from a cold, so she wasn't at her best. They all enjoyed SaraKay, of course.

Saturday I only had three places to be--Blackfoot District Merit Badge Pow Wow at Snake River Junior High, a Wood Badge staff development in Pocatello, and an LDS relations meeting with Sister Reynolds of the General Primary Presidency. I was the point man for the latter in scheduling, gaining entrance to the building, and the sound and audiovisual stuff. It was a great meeting and we ended up having almost 400 people there from the council.

[Mom] I appreciate Daddy giving you the details of our Boise trip. When we were introduced in Dave and Andrea's gospel doctrine class, I commented that we were making our annual "Christmas" visit. It got a good laugh but it was the truth. We fully intended to go last December and the weeks were so full that we just kept pushing it back until we decided that Easter was the soonest we could do it. We really did have a great time and appreciate the Boise Larsen's hospitality.

Daddy commented on the musical program presented by the Eagle stake. It was so impressive! Most of the musical numbers performed by the 100+ voice choir accompanied by the orchestra were the arrangements done by the BYU Men's choir, the BYU Choir, and the Tabernacle Choir including "In That Morn," "Redeemer of Israel," and "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing." What a thrill and wonderful way to celebrate Easter!

It was a poignant weekend for Andrea since she received the news of her Grandfather Springer's passing on Friday. Her mother, who is still serving her mission in El Salvador, won't be able to attend but Dave and Andrea and family were planning to leave yesterday and attend the funeral.

Our weather here has been windy and cold. In some ways it is welcome since it gives me an excuse to stay inside and take care of business instead of feeling guilty about not being outside doing yard work. It has been nice to get some of our spring work done and especially to get our apple trees pruned. We invited the Ellis's to use the pasture in exchange for them maintaining the fences and so we have solved that problem for another year. I mentioned on family chat that I am downsizing our garden and there was a gasp of disbelief that went up from the crowd, but the last few years we have had such a surplus that we are

overwhelmed by it all. So, if we can keep ourselves in check and not get overzealous, we will simplify that part of our summer and see how we get along.

I need to go. I have orientation tonight for SaraKay as an upcoming freshman and then a meeting with the superintendent about the music program in the district. We love each of you and pray that your lives will be centered on Christ and the gospel.

April 20, 2004

[Mom] I just finished reading Jenny's family letter. What a treat to feel like we are sharing in their experience in Wisconsin. I have so appreciated the letters we have received from each of you and am grateful that modem technology has permitted us the luxury of enjoying each other's company. This has been especially true for Becky since normally with regular mail there could be a several weeks turnaround time. What a blessing to be able to email her and know that we are current.

The other night Daddy and I visited Lyle and Brenda Godfrey. Bishop Godfrey has cancer and is undergoing weekly treatments in Rexburg. The side effects include nausea, diarrhea, and hiccups. Yes, hiccups. He had them for three days last week until they were able to get some other medication to relieve them. What a circus and trial for them. Of course, they are putting on a brave face, but the prognosis for Bishop isn't very hopeful. They have been such dear friends over the years and it is hard to see them struggling through this again when, after the last bout six years ago, the doctors declared him cured. Cancer is a terrible thing and the treatments themselves can be difficult and damaging. Our prayers are with them.

Last Thursday was the annual spring concert for our community orchestra. This year SaraKay has joined and it has been a wonderful experience for her. Linnea has chosen easier music and invited the strings class at the Jr. High to join. Next year ALL band and strings students will receive credit by attending orchestra once a week. Linnea will take attendance and issue grades. The band program has been discontinued due to lack of interest. The last few years there have only been eight students in the entire high school that have taken band. This new approach will offer band in 5th-8th grades and then, when there is a good nucleus of students, they will have it offered in high school again. This will work well for SaraKay since if she took strings as well as choir in high school, her electives would be so limited. Of course, seminary also has to figure into the equation.

Last Saturday was festival. For the last several months SaraKay has been preparing for it and we were grateful to have the day finally arrive. On Friday evening Daddy gave her a father's blessing. Her performance was at 8:27 a.m. If she did well she would be invited back for scholarships that afternoon. Needless to say, we were both pretty stressed about it since there was a cash award toward a music camp if she won one of the scholarship spots. Her performance with the judge was nearly flawless. She received a perfect score and we were both very pleased. We arrived home after the morning appointment and tried to fill the time until we had the scholarship tryouts at 1:45. When we heard the list of contestants, nine of eleven of them were from Snake River and most of them were in SaraKay's close circle of friends.

When SaraKay performed she started out well but on one passage she stumbled. I could feel her confidence slipping and then as she got near the end of her piece, she lost her place. Her ending, which normally was her strongest part, turned out to be pieced together. I knew she was disappointed in her performance, as was I. It was especially tough since she had put in the time and effort for so many months and just couldn't hold it together. You can all identify, I'm sure. I sat in the audience, feeling like I was going to explode with all the tension. I think the older I am getting, the more I dread these competitions. I know I need to be there, but it wears me out.

Later, reflecting on my anguish, I thought of the Savior's atonement and how he suffered for us. That whole concept of vicarious suffering makes sense to me because of the experiences I go through with my children. (I recognize that my experiences in no way compare with the Savior's.) I struggle when I know you are struggling and the pain is just as real as if I was the one enduring it.

When all was said and done, SaraKay got first alternate and her friend, Zac Hansen, took first place. I told her that it was easier to lose to Zac than to one of her many girlfriends who competed against her, but, just the same, losing is never easy. She is still committed to attending music camp in Logan this summer with Katie and Sam. We are excited for that opportunity.

[Dad] Today was interesting as I went with another scout professional to make presentations to two groups of about 75 kindergartners about Tiger

Cubs. We were able to get them excited enough that contact people are already getting calls.

Yesterday started out as a normal Sabbath and then evolved into a number of interviews and other meetings. One of the highlights of the day was the annual recognition of girls who have completed their Personal Progress during the past year. SaraKay is just one major project and four or five little items away from being completed. Her goal is to finish as a Beehive and it looks like she is going to make it.

Saturday ended up being a very long work day. Starting with opening up the high school at 7:30 a.m. for the Venturing Olympics and helping with that and all its myriad of details and getting lunch and cleanup and finishing about 3:00. Then I came home and collapsed and rested until I went back to help with the council recognition night from 5:00 until 10:00 pm. Both events were very successful and I was pleased to have the opportunity to rub shoulders with so many great scouters. The last two years, stake conference has conflicted with the recognition night and I have missed that association. Stake conference is next weekend and we have a visiting authority, Elder Steven Laney of the Seventy from the Boise area.

Last night for FHE we went to the post-festival recital held at SRJH. It was inspirational to hear all the talent that was showcased that night. SaraKay was recognized as one of the Outstanding Performers and as 1st Alternate Scholarship Winner. She did a wonderful job on her piece and was definitely the standout of the night as far as we were concerned. She was excited to go to her lesson this morning and get something new to work on.

April 27, 2004

[Mom] I just read Chet's reply to Jenny and Paul's question of the week and I realized that our letter is now going to a truly international audience! Hopefully that won't change anything since I've always been known for my aversion to change and at 58 it's hard to teach me any new tricks.

Our week last week was busy, especially with getting things prepared for the upcoming stake conference. I had my days pretty much planned out when I got a call from the charter school asking me to substitute on Friday. I've thought that I could handle an occasional day now and then, so I agreed. It was fun to see the kids again. I did come home grateful that I don't have to work every day, though.

Conference was wonderful. We had a visiting Area Authority Seventy from Oregon, Elder Laney, and he was such a capable teacher and speaker. I helped with the three meals we provided over the course of the two-day conference and it was sweet to be a part of the inner circle and share in that.

Daddy did a good job with his Sunday talk and received good feedback. He'll probably tell you more when he writes. I suspect that this stake presidency will be released before long. It has certainly been a pleasant experience for both of us, and the associations are wonderful.

Tim left on Wednesday afternoon for his summer job in Albuquerque. His original plan was to spend that night with Jeremy in St. George, but after he checked Mapquest he realized that the direct route from Provo would take him 11 hours, while if he went by way of St. George, he was adding several more hours. Consequently, he let Jeremy know that he wouldn't be coming that way and carried on, arriving Thursday morning. The rest of the crew arrived Saturday and Sunday and he called yesterday with glowing reports about their wonderful apartment, clean-cut guys, their ward building less than a 20-minute drive away, and a fun Saturday night elder's quorum party. I'm glad that it looks like he will have a chance for some social interaction. It's hard to put in the long hours and not have anything to look forward to. Hopefully when he gets his computer hooked up he will join us on chat.

Although Jenny hasn't made a big deal of it, she will be getting her master's degree at graduation ceremonies the middle of May. Her parents are flying out to be there and will spend a few days with them. I'm sure that will be a real treat for the entire family! Congratulations, Jenny, we're proud of you!

Randy will be starting his new job the first week of July; they are trying to figure out just when and how to get this move made. We are overjoyed to know they will be closer and able to participate in family events. From all indications, most of the family will be in the area during the month of July, coming and going at different times, and so when everyone's vacation plans are set, let us know. John and Laurel are the unknowns right now with them awaiting word on China, so we will firm up plans for family outings once we get their schedule and know what we're doing.

Chad, Nate's son, has been selected to be the construction manager for the Rexburg Temple, so he and Trish will be moving to Rexburg in the near

future. We're so pleased and excited for him! Tenille was married last Saturday and all their family was gathered for that event! Even Keith and Maggie and five made it. I'm sure it was a wonderful time for all of them. We're hoping that our Richard's reunion at Bear Lake will be well attended by the cousins. At this point it looks like there could be a pretty good bunch of you there.

Steve had Lasik surgery last week and is struggling a little with it. Bonnie and Shauntel both had such immediate positive results that it is a little disconcerting that Steve's hasn't been quite as quick to heal. I talked to Bonnie today and she said that there is usually a few weeks before the 20/20 goal is reached following surgery.

Last night on chat Becky mentioned that she was called to be the Primary president. I'm sure she will enjoy it. I can't remember what the branch's numbers are, but it will be fun to be in there with Maddie and Tate and help provide a good program for the children.

[Dad] I wanted to hurry and add a few comments so we could get this sent out today. Sue mentioned the conference and what a treat it was to have a visiting authority. Elder Steven Laney of the 5th Quorum of Seventy is from Ontario, Oregon and was a wonderful strength to our stake conference. He had many interesting personal stories and experiences about general authorities that really made them personal and helped us to connect with them. Our conference really started Friday night with a temple session and chapel session. We were really gratified to nearly fill the chapel at the temple and had a great experience with President Richardson and his wife. Peter Cannon of the mission presidency was with us also. He told of an experience of having feelings against a person in his stake and meeting him coming into the temple and sitting with him during the session and having a change in heart so that by the time they were through, he would have been comfortable in the prayer circle with him. The power of the temple to change hearts and reconcile differences and to help us to see things as they really are.

Saturday, we started with a luncheon with Elder Laney at 12:30 and then a training session with just the stake presidency until 3:40. Priesthood Leadership meeting was from 4:00 to 6:00 and then the general adult session from 7:00 to 9:00. The training we received from Elder Laney was wonderful and insightful. Just one example. He asked, "Why did the British lose the revolutionary war?" Because they just kept marching, just the same as they always had. We must be like the colonists and adapt. As leaders we must be more visionary in looking into the future. Satan has changed his tactics and we must be prepared to change accordingly to combat his influence and firm up the defenses of the home. As we read the scriptures, we should spend more time pondering and allowing the Spirit opportunity to tutor us and prompt us as to what we should personally be doing.

Sunday was a full day with an early morning meeting with converts and reactivated members over the past couple of years. We filled the Relief Society room to overflowing and had a wonderful meeting with them. The general conference session was a full one with over 43% of the stake in attendance. Based on that we are going to revisit our system of two sessions. Following the general session, we met with the high council and all the bishops in an evaluation meeting with Elder Laney. We then had an opportunity for a luncheon with the stake presidency and our wives with him before he headed back home. After that, we set apart a new stake Primary presidency and then we had a bi-stake youth fireside with President Dirk Driscoll and his wife Dana (Polatis) which was especially nice because they are headed to Iowa as mission president about the 1st of July and will touch base with Mike when they see him.

May 4, 2004

[Mom] Paul and Jenny called last Thursday with the news that the baby is a boy! Paul pointed out the interesting fact that thus far in the family, everyone but David and Andrea have had a girl first and a boy second. Hmm...I never really thought about that. Anyway, we are pleased that we'll have another grand grandson and wish Jenny well with the rest of the pregnancy.

The other good news of the week is that Mike's weekend with Marci was fun and they are continuing the relationship. Yes, Mike admits he did kiss her, and "No," he won't tell us how many times! Mike received word that he got his first two choices for his externship and will be doing the first six weeks starting the middle of July in Colorado and the next six weeks in Des Moines. He was overjoyed to have gotten the ones he asked for. His work in Colorado will be with migrant workers (Spanish speaking) and the Des Moines one is doing oral surgery, his favorite!

The last few days have been absolutely beautiful but for much of last week, it was cold, windy, and

we even had a terrible snowstorm. Fortunately, this time of year the snow doesn't last long. Personally I was grateful for the inclement weather since I had committed to doing some phoning for Daddy. If the weather is bad, I feel justified in staying indoors, and for Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday Daddy and I kept the phones hot, calling 40 Primary presidents, carefully tracking all the cub scouts in their wards. It was pretty overwhelming, but this semi-annual exercise helps them keep track of all the cub-age boys in their ward boundaries and enroll as many of them as possible. The area has two great non-denominational packs but it was interesting to see that nearly 10% of the boys serviced in LDS packs were non-members. The sad thing is that many of these young boys come from member homes but the parents haven't been active and have never taken care to have their sons baptized and so the boy is growing up without the blessings of the gospel.

On Saturday he spent the day doing all the projects around the yard that had been on my "to do" list. By the end of the day, we were both pretty exhausted but the yard looks as good as it has in a long time. Our trees are prospering and I've set out some pansies and petunias. Hopefully we won't have another spring snow storm!

Mark and Rita have been in Rexburg doing repairs on their apartments there and will be coming for supper and FHE tonight

It was fun to have Tim on chat last night. He seems pretty happy with his situation there in Albuquerque. I visited with Linda the other day at Kesler's and she mentioned that her daughter, Lisa, and her husband, Jason, will be going to Albuquerque for a graduate program in the fall. Their family is getting spread out, too, but Jason and Lisa are pleased to have this opportunity. Ryan and McKenzie are in Moscow in a Master's program there, Emily is in Salt Lake, Garen in Alpine and of course, Ashley is still on a mission in Brazil.

I received a phone call today from Maren. She and Brock are here for Brock's grandpa's funeral and will be staying for about a week. Brock received his Masters and is now in a two to three-year Doctoral program. They just had their second baby, a little girl, a few months ago.

This last Saturday SaraKay agreed to help a family that has taken on a job of running lawn care fliers to all of Idaho Falls and Pocatello. She and a friend left here Saturday morning about 8 and got home at 6:30. I worried most of the day about her because after we accepted the job, we learned that she would get six cents a flier and I couldn't see how she was going to make much money at that price. Well, she put in a very long, hot, exhausting day and when the 13 hours were over (take out time for the trip to and from Idaho Falls and lunch break), she made $31.00. About $4.00 an hour.

She was so worn out, sunburned, and sore that I wasn't sure she was going to make it to church yesterday. We rubbed heated lotion on her aching legs, and applied lotion to all the sunburn spots on the backs of her legs and arms. She hobbled to church yesterday, but did make it. It is a four-Saturday job and she feels like she needs to keep her commitment to them. She is trying to find another friend to take with her and I have agreed to call the family and tell them that I will pick her up earlier in the afternoon. It was just too long and hard and she is younger than many of the other runners. Hopefully they will understand and work with us.

SaraKay received her Freshman orientation packet with all the anticipated expenses for the year and she figures that she will need to have about $600 in the bank prior to school starting in the fall. We are fishing around for other work since her cemetery job isn't enough hours. She has applied to do housekeeping for a woman and we are calling some of the local farmers about the possibility of hoeing beets. It is a challenge to find work since she isn't 16 yet, and after the horror stories on chat about employment in the "McDonald's sector," I know we will probably opt for Kesler's when she comes of age.

[Dad] The plans with Dad last night crumbled. I didn't get out of my meetings until almost 6:00. Sue finally tracked Mark and Rita down in Twin with Josh & Jet to remind them of our plans, but too late to pick up Dad at the ECF. We had a nice dinner and visit with them and we are getting more anxious for them to get moved and settled here. Today Mark has an interview at the Idaho Leadership Academy as a mentor beginning next fall. The outcome of that interview will have a lot to do with setting a timeline for their move.

I am getting back up to speed on my exercise routine. I biked 12 miles yesterday and this morning spent 20 minutes on the treadmill and 20 minutes on the stationary bike. The change in my prescription from my last visit with the doctor a month ago seems to have settled my blood sugars

into the range they should be and I hope my HbAIC readings will be much better at my next quarterly checkup.

Sunday was a pretty full day as we had presidency meeting and then visited three wards--M6, R1, and R3. After dinner and a quick nap were recommend interviews until after 7:00.

Saturday morning was absorbed by a District Cub Scout Mountain Man Rendezvous. It was a wonderful activity with nearly 200 Cub Scouts and their families and leaders. They got to throw tomahawks, learn about black powder rifles and cannons and knives, ride in a horse drawn wagon, make a leather pouch, etc. The night before was a bicycle rodeo at Jensen's Grove for one of my community packs and was another great event. With all the calling and the activities, we rounded up over 100 new cub scouts for the week.

In Riverside 3rd Ward, Leo Teton, a recent convert to the church was at the sacrament table and it brought back memories of Moreland 2nd with our Spanish Sunday School and having Mexicans bless the sacrament and the great outpouring of the Spirit because the ward was reaching out and being so inclusive. I could feel the same spirit in R3. Leo gained his testimony through study of the Book of Mormon and has had to overcome some resistance but has a great testimony and spirit and is helping to bridge some cultural differences.

May 12, 2004

[Dad] We have felt a little shaken up this weekend. The Moreland-Riverside road in front of our home is being rebuilt and resurfaced. Wherever there are soft spots, they have to dig out the mud, lay down a layer of fabric, cover and compact, layer upon layer with compaction tests performed to make sure it measures up to specifications. The first such spot happened to be right in front of our house. So, they were digging a deep trench and then as they refilled it, the rollers and road graders would really shake the ground. We couldn't even get in or out of our driveway because it was so deep; we had to park across the street. Then yesterday, our phone line went dead--they had cut it and while we were waiting for the Quest repairman, all calls were forwarded to my cell phone.

Sunday we brought Dad out for a special non-institutional dinner for Mother's Day. He seemed pretty melancholy but got along pretty well. I think that he has reached a point where, as much as he wants to get out of the ECF, the fear of the unknown and all the details that would have to be taken care of to provide for his care and the probable greater expense involved is just too daunting. He is secure and safe where he is and knows that whatever happens, his needs will be met there.

Thanks for all of you being so attentive to your mother on Mother's Day. We are so looking forward to the Shakespearean festival!!! What an unexpected treat. The last time I saw a real Shakespeare play was in Stratford upon Avon while on my mission--"The Tempest."

[Mom] Let me start by echoing Daddy's appreciation for all you did to make a fuss over me on Mother's Day. It made for such a sweet Sabbath to be able to hear from you, and the gift to the Shakespearean festival was a wonderful surprise! We know of several people who have attended and it always gets rave reviews! Thank you again for your thoughtfulness.

Daddy also mentioned our road repair...or should I say, rebuild. We feel as if we are under siege. Actually, there was one day when they dug a trench across the whole front of our property that was six feet deep and about 10 feet wide and we had no access to our driveway for the day. Fortunately, the contractor finished the job by nightfall and didn't leave us stranded for more than a day. In the meantime, we are driving on a roadbed that is off limits to all but residents and we have to dodge semis, road graders, flagmen, and heavy-duty rollers every time we leave. As you can imagine I am on a first name basis with the flagman, and when he sees me coming, he just waves me on. Seriously though, it is beginning to "grate" on our nerves and we will be “grate”ful when the heavy equipment and road "grater" are gone.

The past few days have been somewhat of a marathon. Friday night was the annual high priest banquet. SaraKay held a night games party here while we were gone and it wound down about 11:30. She left the next morning to run flyers in Idaho Falls and I left soon after that to attend a baby shower for Deniece's daughter, Katie, in Rexburg. It was fun to spend the morning with Deneice and her daughters and to meet Katie's friends from BYU-I and relatives from her husbands' side of the family. I ran some errands in Idaho Falls while I waited for SaraKay since I had arranged to get her at 3 instead of having such a long day as she had the week before. As it turned out, they were faster than last Saturday's

crew and she was through early and beat me home.

Sunday I spoke to the Young Men of the ward about public speaking, and then on Tuesday I spoke to the YW in the Third Ward about "Looking to the Future with Hope." By the time I finished up last night, I was about talked out.

Today I went to SaraKay's strings, piano, and choral festival in America Falls for the area schools. I have never gone to one of them before and another mother offered me a ride and I decided to do it. I was glad I did. I heard all of the vocal competition, individual strings competition, as well as SaraKay's piano number and the strings and choral ensemble groups. It made for a full day, but so fun!

I have also been helping these last few weeks with Joe Cannon's campaign. He called and asked if I would be willing to endorse him in the paper and then ask about getting a letter that could be sent to voters in my area. I got the letter ready and his wife brought me copies and envelopes and I've been getting them signed and addressed. Daddy has been very supportive, although because of his position as Chairman of the Republican Central Committee, he has not endorsed one candidate over the other, preferring to let the voters make the choice. I'll have the letters finished by tomorrow. I have no idea how this vote will go but Joe is a good guy and I think he does a good job for us in Boise.

In closing I want to express my love to each of you. Mother's Day is always a teary time for me. I just keep thinking of all you kids and how blessed I am to be your mother. Sunday in sacrament meeting a young mother and her 11-year-old daughter sang a song that had each one sing to the other, "I'm glad that you're my daughter," and "I'm glad that I'm your daughter." In the final verse the mother and daughter sing together and the two melodies fit together in a beautiful harmony. It was such a touching song and I was already in a pretty mellow mood after SaraKay gave her talk just a few minutes before. I was sitting by Lile Bowman and Ferrell Wray and I realized that Ferrell, who lost his wife several months ago was sitting on the other side of Lile, sobbing. Fortunately, I had extra tissues and was able to share. It made me realize how bittersweet Mother's Day was for him this year. My heart aches for him and his family.

May 18, 2004

[Mom] It's a beautiful spring day outside. We've had a lot of cool, rainy weather lately and so the sunshine is welcome. The other day while standing at the kitchen sink I noticed a fat robin hopping around on the back lawn. All at once a beautiful little bird landed on the small pine tree and began chirping. The bird was bright orange with black wings and a few other bright hues on its beak and tail. This morning I noticed it again, high up on one of the willows. It has been an unexpected pleasure to have our windbreak become somewhat of a bird refuge and for the first time since living here, we wake up to the sounds of birds singing. What fun! Of course, we have always enjoyed the seagulls that follow the irrigation water and create quite a chorus when we are watering, but they are truly fair-weather friends and are only around when the nightcrawlers surface during our watering turn. I think I will put out a little bird feeder and see if we can't persuade the canary to stick around.

Last Thursday I sang in a sextet for a Relief Society Visiting Teacher conference. We had five songs to learn and so we had been practicing for several weeks. The performance was fun and I hated to see it come to an end. It has been a long time since I have sung some good old three-part women's harmony and I just loved doing it again. If life slows down, I would enjoy getting together a women's group and do some ensemble work. SaraKay thinks I should call the group the "Sexy Singing Grandmas." Something about that name doesn't ring true. I think it is the use of Sexy and Grandma in the same breath.

On Friday I went with others on the trek committee, searching for a location for our Trek in July. We drove, bumped, banged, and plowed along cow trails and backroads in the Bone area, looking at possible sites. It rained on us for a while and I worried that we might get stuck and not make it home by nightfall, but the four wheel-drive saved the day and we arrived home safely.

Saturday we attended the Idaho Falls Symphony and went to dinner courtesy of Christmas gifts from Shauntel and Becky. It was truly an entertaining and educational experience. One of the selections the Chorale performed was "Frostiana," several of Robert Frost's poems put to music. The words to the poems had been printed up so that we could follow along and even read them in advance. I was unfamiliar with some of the poems, but others I remember studying in

high school and SaraKay had read and discussed some of them in her literature class. I thought I remembered some of you kids singing them in Chamber's years ago, but maybe not. They weren't as good put to music as they were recited, but it was still interesting. We appreciated the opportunity to get "culturified."

[Dad] Last night for FHE we worked in the garden and planted some red potatoes, onions, and corn. I had watered the garden well last week and it was just right to work and plant. There is something that happens when you work with the soil like that--something wonderful. Sunday was a little lighter because President Shipley was out of town. But, it was still a full day with choir, Priesthood Commemoration broadcast, and then the continuous scripture reading fireside. How many of you were 1333 readers?

Friday night and Saturday I had a District training that I helped with. It was especially rewarding because one of the participants was the father of the twins that Sue introduced to Cub Scouts a couple years ago at the Charter School. They are now Boy Scouts and we included them in the training because they had to camp out with their dad and most of the things we were doing were related to requirements they needed to pass off for their Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class badges.

Sue already mentioned the Idaho Falls Symphony, Chorale, and eating out. We appreciated so much being able to have such a wonderful night out, courtesy of Becky and Shaunie. At Jakers, our waitress was Emily Thomas and she really gave us the royal treatment--free strawberry lemonade and a free dessert to share between us. The blackened prime rib was mouthwatering and wonderful.

May 25, 2004

[Mom] The road crew is hard at it today working in front of our property, but the weather was so pleasant that I went ahead and spent the morning in the garden, putting in my bedding plants. This year I took the plunge and bought some "Wall of Water" protectors. They are guaranteed to protect the plants from late frosts and create a "greenhouse effect." Our neighbors, the Hannis, use them and are very successful at keeping things growing, so I decided to give it a try. It took me a while to get them set up but if they do the trick, it will be well worth it.

The good news of the week is that Tim made it into his Master's program! He will have two more years at BYU and have a Master's of Accounting with a Tax emphasis when he is through. He was pretty excited when we called him with the news. He did well last semester and was hopeful that he would make it. I didn't get a chance to talk with him this past weekend so I'm not sure how sales are going. He has been enjoying the Albuquerque area more than Houston, which was too spread out. He had a lot into gas because of the distances involved in getting to his sales location last summer.

SaraKay received word that one of the scholarship winners couldn't go to summer camp, so she got the $100 she was hoping for to defray the cost of the summer music camp in Logan. Steph will be coming on June 13th with our fireside speaker, Susan Madsen, a woman from her ward. She will bring Katie with her, and then SaraKay will ride back with them and attend camp that week. We will go to Logan that weekend to help Shauntel and Randy move in and to attend SaraKay's concert. We appreciate Steph's willingness to include SaraKay with Katie and Sam.

Mark and Rita called Wednesday and asked about staying the night on Thursday en route to Colorado. They were in Twin Falls helping Jet and Josh get moved. At ten that night Mark called and said that they had just finished and wouldn't be coming. SaraKay took the call and didn't think to ask if they would be coming later so I assumed they would drive straight through. What a surprise when Mark arrived about 4:30 on Thursday afternoon. He had been stopped by a flagman at the Godfrey's and so he parked at the stake center and walked over. I was on my knees working on my flower garden when he appeared out of nowhere and startled me. After a short visit I told him to go back to his car, pull out onto the roadbed and just do what he had to do to skirt the workmen and all the equipment and get into our driveway. It is pretty daunting if you aren't used to it.

We enjoyed visiting that evening as well as driving around looking at building lots and homes for sale. Mark will get word later in June regarding a job he interviewed for with the ILA, the charter school for 9-12 grades in Pingree where Gary is the principal. We are sure hoping that it will all fall into place for them.

Wednesday was SaraKay's last concert of the year. Although I had attended festival the week

before and heard most of their numbers, I was still excited to go. Daddy attended and we took lots of pictures. It was so fun to see the progress both the choral and strings groups have made this year. SaraKay had her last piano lesson last week and will be taking a break for the summer. We are still trying to find her some steady part-time work since the housekeeping job we hoped to get fell through.

Our work on the Trek is getting more involved. We are meeting tonight with all the other committee heads and making sure that we are all in agreement as to the schedule of events.

We appreciated the family letters and pictures. Right now our thoughts and prayers are especially on Shauntel and Randy as they prepare to move (and on Mike with his romance, and on Tim with his selling, and on Steve and Bonnie and their cruise).

[Dad] Today is Primary election day and we are excited to see how some of the votes come out. We have several races that we are particularly interested in--sheriff, county commissioner, and the legislative race with Steve Adams and Joe Cannon. I know there are good men involved in each of those races and ultimately any one of them will probably serve us well, but we have our preferences.

Yesterday I drove to Twin Falls to the Amalgamated Sugar plant and picked up a ton of sugar which they have donated again for the Tiger Ear Booth. This year they didn't have any 25# bags so I had to get 40 50# bags. Last week I was able to get the flour donation again and picked up 6 pallets of flour from Pendleton Flour Mill and have it currently stored at Blackfoot Transfer. I just wish I could come up with a good source for canola oil and powdered milk.

June 2, 2004

[Mom] Tonight before going to bed I told Daddy to get me up about 6:30. This morning I awoke as he was coming down the hall. He called my name as he got to the bedroom door and said that he had just been bitten by the Matamores's dog. I crawled out of bed to see a bloody leg with six puncture wounds and blood streaming down his calf and soaking his stocking and gym shoes. He related to me that he was riding his bike on the opposite side of the street from the Matamores's and the dogs came running out to chase him. He fended them off and quickly rode to the opposite end of the parking lot where he usually parks his bike while he walks and runs a couple of laps before coming home. He questioned whether he should walk it but he couldn't see the dogs anymore and so he started out. When he got to the shelter area, both dogs came out from behind it and started chasing him. He tried all the techniques he had read about in regards to dog attacks, but to no avail. While he was trying to soothe the one in front, the other one circled around back and bit into his leg. Upon arriving home we called the Matamores's but the parents were gone. We called 911 and they instructed him to go to the emergency room and that a policeman would meet him there. They kept him at the ER to drip some antibiotic into his leg and bandage him up after taking pictures of the bite. Hopefully we can resolve this without too much hassle. Daddy seems to be doing okay despite the trauma. To add insult to injury, on his way home from RiteAid he got picked up for speeding in a school zone. What a way to start off the new week!

I can't believe that we are in June already! It amazes me how quickly the weeks pass! We had a quiet and restful holiday weekend. School dismissed on Thursday at noon and I drove SaraKay and a friend, Kwani, to the movies in Idaho Falls while I decorated Grandma Gooch's grave and did some shopping. Originally SaraKay was going to have a bigger group go to the movies, but we were limited by the space in the van. The more she went over her guest list, the more convinced she was that she would have to exclude quite a few of her good friends and that would hurt their feelings.

Eventually, after a lot of agonizing, she just invited one friend and kept it quiet so the others wouldn't be offended. The timing for me was about perfect and I was able to drop them off, run my errands and arrive back at Edwards' Theatre just a short while before they were through. When I picked the girls up at the theatre, the sky was dark and ominous. Before we got home, we had driven through a terrible rain, thunder, and lightning storm. In Idaho Falls the water was running in the streets and visibility was affected. Once we got onto the freeway and headed south, things calmed down and driving wasn't so treacherous. It's been nice to get the moisture although I know it foiled a lot of Memorial Day plans.

Friday morning I awoke with my back stiff and sore. Some of you will remember that I had a bad bout with my back about 20 years ago when Steph was a freshman in college. I went through

several weeks of hobbling around wearing a back brace. It took several months to improve. The next time that it happened I went to an orthopedic surgeon and he said that I was dealing with lower back muscle spasms brought on by stress. He gave me some muscle relaxants. They worked like a miracle drug and I was able to quickly regain my strength. Since those initial two episodes, I have been very careful to limit myself and my activities when I feel another one coming on.

Well, for some unknown reason, I didn't get any prior warning on this one, and it hit with a vengeance. I've spent most of the last few days in bed and I'm finally starting to feel like I'm going to live. Daddy and SaraKay have been so good to help around the house and on Sunday Daddy and Bishop Godfrey administered to me. Yesterday was better and today I'm doing pretty good. Hopefully this will soon pass and I can get the things done that I need to.

On Sunday we had Grandpa and Alva Lu to dinner and visited the cemetery to decorate the graves. It made for a pleasant afternoon. There is something both sweet and inspiring about seeing the graves decorated.

I'm going to close. It's a beautiful day outside and SaraKay and her mutual class are going rollerblading at Jensen's Grove this morning. Should be fun.

[Dad] Sue gave you a pretty full account of my exciting episode with the dog encounter yesterday. It took three pokes with the needle before they could get the shunt in for my IV. The nurses said my skin was tough. I had never thought of myself as tough-skinned. After cleansing the wound and getting the antibiotic drip they dismissed me from the hospital. I was walking out to the car and the nurse came running out and called me back and said that I was bleeding again, sure enough, the walking had starting the bleeding again and they cleaned me up and put on a dressing before letting me go the second time.

Needless to say, with all the fun and adventures of my morning I was late for the staff meeting which we were holding in the fort at Krupp Scout Hollow. My team was responsible for the lunch and Sue and I had worked things out with a meal that wouldn't take much time and attention and could be served quickly. It was wonderful!! We received a lot of compliments on the barbecued brisket, frog-eye salad, potato salad, broccoli & bacon salad, and chips--with banana crush and a bundt cake for dessert. I just hope that I wasn't the final straw in Sue's stress load that flipped out her back.

It was a treat to have Dad here on Sunday. He enjoyed getting out and being able to spend a few minutes on the wind-swept hill of the Riverside-Thomas Cemetery. He has looked so good and seemed more at peace lately. I sure love my Dad!!

For my ride this morning, I decided to stay on 740 West so that I wouldn't go past Matamores's. So, I ended up not seeing any action from the dog front. Upon Sue's insistence, I did carry a walking stick to be able to fend off my adversary, should any appear. By the way, it looks like they are going to pave the road today. We are excited to get that done.

June 9, 2004

[Mom] I just got back from taking SaraKay to the cemetery to work. They are cleaning off all the Memorial Day flowers and getting into the mowing now that the holiday is over. We are enjoying beautiful weather. Daddy had scouting commitments all weekend but SaraKay and I took care of the lawn and garden and kept things looking nice. Next week SaraKay will be in Logan with Stephani's kids attending music camp. She is pretty excited about it! I'm excited, too, since we will be going to Logan on Friday to help with the move and then attend the concert on Saturday.

We're hoping that everything goes well for Shauntel and Randy and that they are able to get everything done for their move. It's always a mammoth task, whether you are moving across town or across the country, but at least they know we can be there to help.

Several of you have called and asked about Dad's leg and my back. We are quite a pair! Daddy's leg is healing nicely and he hasn't gotten any infection in it, so we are happy about that. I have been moving slowly and giving my back a chance to heal. This morning I walked for a while at the church. This Friday Daddy and I are planning to go with the Trek committee and walk the Trek route. Hopefully I will feel well enough to do that since much of our program takes place along the route that the participants walk that first day.

Yesterday Richard Tominaga bore his testimony and told about one of his farm wells running dry. When the well-drillers arrived and began work on a new well, they told Richard that there are wells going dry all up and down the valley. It is such a frightening prospect for the farmers who depend

on irrigation for a crop. People in Magic Valley are having similar problems. It certainly keeps us humble when we recognize how much we depend on the Lord for our basic needs.

We had a good chat last night. Becky left early because of a call that came in from Chet. Close friends of theirs who now live in Tooele had their seven-year-old son run over by a car at a ward party. The children had been playing in the water and this little boy went out to lay on the blacktop to get warm and dry. Not realizing that he was there, a fellow ran right over him and killed him. What a tragedy for all concerned!

That reminded me of an incident that we had with Paul at a ward party. We were having a great time and all you kids were running around with your friends. Pretty soon I realized that I hadn't seen Paul for a while. He was probably about 18 months old at the time. After making a quick perusal of the playground and ball field and checking around the stake center, I became concerned and let the word out that we were missing Paul. Everyone started looking and calling, but to no avail. Finally, we found him at the far end of the ball field. He had wandered off and noticed some cows in a corral. He had intended to get to them but had fallen into a deep ditch that ran along the side of the corral, and he was so small that he couldn't get out. He was in the ditch crying when we arrived. Fortunately for us, there was no water in the ditch or he would have drowned.

I realized that one of the most dangerous times for a child is when they are in unfamiliar territory and can easily get lost while parents and siblings are busy and oblivious to the perils. Children don't necessarily know their limits in such a situation and will explore. I was so grateful that Paul was spared. Our hearts and prayers go out to these sweet young parents in their time of loss.

I haven't mentioned for a while about Grandpa. Some of you have asked how he was getting along. I think that he has been discouraged lately. He really thought that once Alva Lu returned from her trip that he could go home, but despite our conversations regarding the situation, we couldn't talk him into believing us. Once Alva Lu returned, he began asking her but she still felt that she couldn't do it. We then went through the process of locating a house that we could rent for Grandpa, but when I sat down with home health personnel and put a pencil to it, it was obvious that we couldn't provide the services in a home that are being provided for him in the care center.

After a lot of work and tears, we decided that we just couldn't do it. I think as we talked through things with Grandpa that he could see what we were up against and he kind of gave up asking about it. It is hard to see him languishing in the care center. Everyone does their best to visit and cheer him up. Alva Lu visits several times a week and usually will attend sacrament meeting with him on Sunday. Gary and Linda and their kids visit during the week as do Dad and I. Rick and Terry took him Sunday night to Aubrey's seminary graduation and dinner. Karen and Jim and family drove from Layton last weekend and spent the day with him. Occasionally he will have some of his acquaintances from the community drop in to visit and he always enjoys that. His sister, Naida, came by last week and his brother, Bim, will soon be arriving from back east to spend the summer in the area. He is so good to spend time with Grandpa. Anyway, he seems to be stabilized and having his basic needs met. I'm sure he would enjoy a card or letter. Keep him in your prayers.

Last night on chat we welcomed Mike and Marci and Tim and Rachel. Everyone is asking the question, “What's up??” Well, I don't know what is up but I just want Mike and Tim to take the time they need to make their decision. It's the most important decision they will ever make and we are praying for wisdom and discernment for them both. I talked to John and Laurel and they said that their time with Mike and Marci was so fun! They gave her a definite "thumbs up.” I think Marci flies out of Chicago on Wednesday, so they will have a couple days with Paul and Jenny, too. Thanks for hosting!

[Dad] Yesterday morning we got up at 3:30 and went to the temple for the 5:00 session with several others from the stake involved in the trek. They were fasting and meeting last night to work on family selections. On Friday we are leaving at 6:00 a.m. to go up and walk the trek to see that everything will work out as planned. It is great to have such diligent committee members who have taken such a personal interest in making this trek happen. I know it is going to be wonderful and am looking forward to Sister Madsen's fireside on Sunday to kick things off.

Last Thursday night was the initial event of a three-day marathon for us Scouters. Thursday night was the reception and recognition of endowment donors. About 18 recognitions were

given out for gifts from $25,000 to $1.5 million. Much of the groundwork for those endowment gifts had been laid while I was endowment director and it was gratifying to see things come to fruition. It was a wonderful event held in conjunction with the Norman Rockwell art tour and there were over 200 people in attendance. The art and some Scouting memorabilia were on display that night and the following two days. Friday we had a finance training seminar from a couple of men from the national Financial Support Division that came with the art exhibit. In addition, we had shifts of professionals manning the exhibit for security and public relations purposes. We had good coverage about the exhibit from all the media and we delighted with the constant stream of people that came through to see seven Norman Rockwell originals, several Joseph Cstari and other artist's works. The exhibit of Scouting memorabilia was owned by Kelly Williams, who owns Kreiman, the patch company that produces most of our patches. It was insured for about $350,000 value. One of the pieces was an original eagle scout pin worth about $15,000.

Saturday was our annual Blue Badge Training for all District volunteers held at the Red Lion Inn with the art exhibit. We had over 200 in attendance, a record number. My part was registration and printing name tags and almost half of them needed to be printed on site using my laptop and a color printer and then laminated. It was quite a process, but we were able to take care of things in an expeditious manner. After cleaning up from Blue Badge, it was necessary for me to wait until the art exhibit closed at 5:00 pm to help dismantle the exhibit and get things sent on their way back to Dallas to the Scouting Museum.

June 15, 2004

[Mom] This morning when I awoke, I felt like so much of the stress I've been feeling this past month was finally gone. Let me explain. Several months ago as we were beginning to plan for the Trek, I was sitting on the dining room couch listening to "Consider the Lilies" and reading my scriptures. At that time, our plans for the Trek were just beginning and it felt like such a daunting task, partly because of the size of the group, but mostly because, as the program committee, we (Bobby Jo and Rex Young and me) had the opportunity to pretty much call the shots as far as what we wanted to do. I decided that each day as I read my scriptures, I would ask the Lord to help me think of ideas and plans that would enhance the experience for the kids and create an atmosphere that would help them feel the Spirit.

One night, as I was sitting thinking (that is an exercise all in itself) the name of Stephani's dear friend, Susan Madsen, popped into my head. She is a noted author in Steph's ward who has written eight books on the Mormon migration west and is a well-spring of knowledge and testimony. That bit of inspiration led to an invitation over the phone to Sister Madsen. It was rather intimidating to call her and plead my case. She was very frank with me and mentioned that both her health (she has Parkinsons) and the distances involved were prohibitory. I suggested that maybe Steph could drive her here and with that she commented that since Stephani was such a good friend, she would be willing to come.

I was overjoyed with her acceptance, but all of her reservations left me worrying about it and I knew that we needed to make it as pleasant and accommodating a situation as we possibly could. Her acceptance put into motion a whole series of events including lining up musical numbers, advertising the event and making other arrangements so that we would get the crowd out and create the setting for her message. Here at home we worked to prepare the house and yard so that we could have a light buffet here for her following the fireside. Weeks before, Steph and I planned out that following the fireside Steph would take SaraKay back to Logan for her music camp this week at USU. Needless to say, with all the arrangements, the weekend was harried and intense. Fortunately, all went as planned and the event was wonderful. Sister Madsen's presentation was just what we wanted and the response was overwhelming.

As a part of the evening, a missionary couple from Aberdeen who just returned from serving in Sister Madsen's daughter's mission (Detroit), attended the fireside and so we invited them to join us for the buffet. I had a brass band practice after the fireside and so Daddy and SaraKay hosted here and when I arrived home everyone was about ready to head home. I so appreciated Steph's willingness to help out with the whole thing. She also got to see some old friends and renew some acquaintances. Katie was here and that was fun to share the event with both of them. By 8:30 they were on their way back to Logan.

Last week SaraKay and I spent several hours getting things ready for her departure including buying some new clothes, locating music, and

organizing herself to account for all the activities and requirements of the week. SaraKay made the decision several weeks ago that once she finished her piano lessons for the school year that she would take a few vocal lessons and try to get some help with her voice. One vocal teacher in the area offered a weeklong (hour a day) intense vocal instruction to jump start the new students and we signed up for that and had a vocal lesson each day last week. I attended with her and I was amazed at how much we both learned!

Friday we were scheduled to walk the Trek trail with the extended committee but heavy rains changed our plans and I spent the day thoroughly cleaning the house. Friday night the co-chairmen called and said that we would be going Saturday morning at 6:00 to walk the trail. I was concerned about spending the day in the hills when I had so much going on, but Daddy and I made arrangements for SaraKay and Saturday morning had prayer before we left that we would be able to handle the physical requirements of the day.

When we arrived at the stake center, Bruce Ellis had arranged for some four-wheelers and two of the other couples brought theirs along. We arrived at the trailhead and began walking with some of the spouses bringing up the rear on the ATV's. We would walk, plan where to stage the different events and activities and walk some more. By about 11:00 we were about halfway through and we decided to double up on the ATV's. Soon I was riding behind Daddy and the bunch of us were whizzing along in the mountains, counting miles, locating trail stops, and figuring out the food rations. By noon we were at base camp and we took time to eat lunch and enjoy the beautiful scenery. Soon thereafter we loaded up and headed for the trailhead. We felt ecstatic and blessed to see that the area we had chosen was going to work well for all our needs.

On the way back to the trailhead Daddy and I just enjoyed the chance to be together. Riding the four-wheeler was so fun. One of the other committee members had such a great time on her borrowed machine that she said she was tempted when she got home that day to go to the ATV store and say those two magic words, "Charge it!" Anyway, we had a good laugh about how much fun it would be to own a couple four-wheelers and take off in the mountains and enjoy the great out-of-doors. Of course, we were aware that we were on private property and guests of the ranchers and that normally we would not have had access to such pristine areas. Anyway, the whole day was fun and we felt grateful to have had such a good experience despite our worries about Daddy's leg and my back. I know the Lord has supported us these past few weeks in our efforts.

I need to close. I'm heading into town in a few minutes to visit Grandpa. The last few weeks I have been reading the conference reports to him and that has been a sweet experience. We are making plans to take him to Jacob's missionary report on July 11th. It doesn't seem possible that Jacob is approaching his release date, June 29th! Terry said that they are beside themselves with excitement! He has been in England and has really enjoyed his time in the field.

Keep in touch. We will be leaving for Logan sometime on Friday depending on Shaunnie and Randy's progress. When I called her this morning she said that most of the big stuff was loaded in the truck on Saturday and that they were sleeping on an air mattress on the floor last night. When they awoke to Arch's protests from the crib in his bedroom, he soon joined them and then all four of them were in the makeshift bed, vying for covers and room! Our prayers are with them that all will go well (reasonably well. Let's be realistic about this!) for them in the coming days. Remember them, especially Arch, in your prayers.

[Dad] I can say "amen" to the feelings aroused and the significance of the stories Sister Madsen shared with the fireside Sunday night as related by Sue. There were many in the audience that were moved and hopefully all were brought to a point of expectation and readiness for the trek. After traversing the route on Saturday, I am really excited about the plans and experiences that are being orchestrated.

Work has been a little less intense this last week. We are still trying to qualify for the end of June membership recognition called the Chief Scout Executive's Winners Circle. I still need nearly 100 boys and am turning over every rock to be able to make it. A recognition is also given to councils that reach 100% of their Friends of Scouting goal by the end of June called the Kweo Award. We are within about $30,000 of reaching that goal, so even though Blackfoot is over 100% I am still following up with donors that have given in the past that have not yet given this year and trying to help put the council over on that goal as well.

One event last week that was quite significant was a Webelos Trail to the Arrow camp held all day Friday, overnight and all-day Saturday. As a part of the campfire program on Friday night we had

three National Guardsmen retire some flags. (These three guys are leaving in a couple of weeks to go to Texas for training prior to embarking to Iraq this fall.) Playing "Taps" as the flags burned added a lot to the ceremony and was rewarding for me.

Let me close with sharing my love with each of you!! God lives! He hears and answers prayers! We are led by a prophet today--the beloved President Gordon B. Hinckley! What a joy to be a part of the Kingdom of God as it is rolling forth to fill the whole earth and to fulfill its destiny in these the latter days!

June 23, 2004

[Mom] The events of the past week have kept us busy and on the run. Our quick trip to Logan to get SaraKay and help Shauntel and Randy move in went as planned. All week long I thought about Shauntel and Randy traveling with the moving truck and car and about Arch and just how traumatic it could be for all of them if he decided that he was tired of traveling. We remembered them in our prayers night and morning as did many of you and it was miraculous to me that they arrived, safe and sound, and sane, within an hour of their planned arrival. We met them about 3:30 at the home Steph has arranged for them through a fellow in her ward. We were all very surprised to see what a lovely place it was! It is in a nice neighborhood and is very modern and roomy. The back yard is wooded and opens into a large pastoral scene that is both quiet and secluded. There is a large covered patio, a walk-out basement, lots of beautiful cabinets and storage areas and other nice features. I think they are very pleased with it and appreciate Steph's efforts to help them find a place that will fit their needs.

Because it was Steve's birthday, we planned a picnic lunch and ate on the back lawn until a storm blew in and drove us all indoors where we finished our meal sitting around on the floor and counter tops since there wasn't any furniture yet. Following supper, we recruited the grandkids to help and between the bunch of us we unloaded the moving van except for the big, heavy stuff. Movers arrived the next morning to help with that task and Randy worked to get things hooked up before he had to fly out Sunday to complete his commitment in St. Louis.

It is sweet to think that the Andersons will be a closer now and that our visits can be more frequent. Arch and Camille warmed up immediately to the cousins. The big surprise of the trip for me was that Arch was so congenial. I thought that after the long hours cooped up in the car and truck that he would be fit to be tied, but Shauntel said that he was fascinated with the big truck and spent most of the trip riding with Randy. Other than an occasional spell of crying before his nap, he really did remarkably well and they were able to cover the miles without too many problems. We are so grateful for that!

It was so good to get SaraKay back home after her weeklong stay with Bennion's. I think the music camp was pretty intimidating for her but the festivities at the Bennion's were a highlight.

The concert on Saturday was amazing! Partway through the week as Daddy and I were sitting down to a very dull and quiet supper, Daddy commented that he wasn't quite ready for life without SaraKay. She certainly does add a spark that keeps things popping!

Part of my arrangement with Steph was that since she took care of SaraKay during music camp week, I would take care of Sam and Josh while she and Linds were at Youth Conference. Several months ago, they were given the assignment to plan a three-day youth conference for the youth in their ward. They have spent countless hours preparing brochures, finding the right facilities at Bear Lake, and organizing equipment and other things. We brought Sam and Josh home with us and that gave Steph the freedom to take care of her responsibilities. They will be arriving in a short while from Logan on their way through to the Tetons for a camping trip with some friends.

One humorous thing happened last night at supper. Throughout the last few days, as the occasion called for it, Josh would break into song. Most of the songs were from various musicals and it was always funny to hear the lyrics of a song which fit the subject of our conversation. I was also amazed that a ten-year-old would have the repertoire that he had. Last night at supper we were talking about some of the funny genetic things that our bodies can do. Sam asked Daddy if he could wiggle his ears and then, of course, Sam gave an amazing demonstration of his ability to do all sorts of interesting movements with his ears.

Well, the conversation went downhill from there and the final challenge was to see if we could cup our tongues in a unique way that made it form into a scalloped flower-like shape. They said that if we could, we could be a part of a special club. As a part of this amazing feat, both Sam and Josh began making strange noises that added to the

bizarreness of this trick. They were both standing up, moving around, making these strange noises and it reached fever pitch within a few short minutes. At that moment, SaraKay and I and Daddy all looked at each other and SaraKay broke into song, singing the lyrics of one of her favorite songs from "Les Miserables" called, "One Day More." At that moment we realized that just one more day and Steph and Linds would arrive and our young charges would be gone. We all started to laugh at how apropos the lyrics were. I guess we beat Josh at his own game!

Seriously, we have enjoyed them and it has been fun to have them here. We have gone to the zoo, the gravel pits, and today we went swimming at the pool in town. I guess we have done it all and it's time for them to move on. Hopefully they won't be scarred for life by their short stay in Idaho.

June 29, 2004

[Mom] I am going to use this week's letter to outline our Richards' reunion plans for July 15-17 and hope that it will answer any questions that you may have. My only regret is that Jonie and John and families will not be able to be here with us. John and Laurel will be making their trip in September for Grant's wedding and will have a chance for some visiting at that time.

On Thursday, July 15th we will gather at Merlin Olsen Park for an afternoon of visiting. There is a small stream as well as playground equipment so hopefully the kids will have plenty to do while the rest of us visit. Please eat lunch before you come to the park since everyone will be arriving at different times and we thought it might simplify things if everyone took care of their own lunch that day. Bring a treat to share with the bunch and plan on staying until about five.

We would like to go to dinner with all the adults (SaraKay and Katie included) at about 6:00 that evening. Work with your host family and arrange for babysitting for this event. We will have someone make reservations at a good place.

Daddy and I may need to leave about seven to get Tim from the airport. His flight arrives about 8:10 pm. He tried to get an earlier flight but none was available. Steve suggested using the shuttle and we'll look into that possibility. Although Tim will miss the dinner, he hopes to get in some visiting time with Paul and Jenny that night since they will be leaving the next day for Wisconsin. He will be returning to Albuquerque on Sunday so he thought he would have time to visit with everyone else before the weekend was over.

Friday morning we will get up, have a quick and simple breakfast, and head for Bear Lake. My sister, Kathy's, home is about five miles from the north shore beach so we will plan to spend our day at that beach. The drought has taken its toll on Bear Lake so we will have lots of beach and shallow water to enjoy on Friday.

For dinner at Kathy's we will be having Dutch oven chicken and potatoes, salads, fruit, cookies, and ice cream. I told Kathy that we would bring enough for our family and add it to what the others bring. I will be letting each family know what their assignments are. Daddy and I will take care of the Dutch oven chicken and potatoes, the drinks and paper products. The barbeque will start about 6:30 or 7:00 and everyone is free to stay as late as you like.

It will be fun to see Nate and Maureen, Chad and Trish, Chelsey and Ryan and maybe Tenille and husband. Of course, Grandma, Kathy, Dick, Abby, Lane and Leslie will also be there. I think that most of Deneice's group will also be there except for Katie's husband, Lance who will be involved in taking the MCAT sometime that weekend. Should be a really fun time.

July 7, 2004

[Mom] Shauntel called about a week ago and asked if they could come visit us for a few days. We were delighted. Randy was in St. Louis finishing things up and was due to arrive this week. SaraKay and I got things done up so that we could relax while they were here. Maybe I shouldn't use the word "relax" to describe their visit.

Archie was on the move and exploring every inch of the house and yard and we did a lot of our visiting while we followed him around from adventure to adventure. He and Camille both loved the trampoline and that activity kept him busy and corralled while we sat in the swing and visited. It's great to have the Andersons back!

Our Fourth of July weekend was quiet and productive. On Friday evening we rented two movies, "Runaway Jury" and "Paycheck." We enjoyed them both and would recommend them. Saturday we just worked around the yard and garden and did some sewing on Trek clothes. Sunday we invited Grandpa to dinner for a few hours. We had asked him about a gift for AlvaLu for her birthday and he asked if we could take him

to pick something out so yesterday we picked him up about 3:30 and took him shopping at Walmart. Following that Daddy just wheeled him around the store for a while and then we brought him here for supper. The weather was absolutely gorgeous! I think Grandpa enjoyed being outside. He kept commenting on how beautiful the weather was and how good it felt to be out in it. Our windbreak provides us with lots of afternoon shade and we're enjoying our backyard.

I visited this morning with Andrea about Thursday, July 15th. Our plan is to arrive at the park about 1:30 or 2:00 and let the kids play while we visit. That day just happens to be Joseph's birthday and Dave and Andrea wondered about bringing a cake and making it a sort of party for him. As some of you are aware, Joseph has been attending a pretty intense summer school program the last few weeks and he is making progress although it isn't as fast as they would like. He is trying hard to master the things he needs to do but attending school during summer vacation isn't very fun. He could sure use some encouraging and we thought that maybe celebrating his birthday and making a fuss over him might be just what he needs right now. If it would work for each of you, could you as a family come up with a small gift for him and we'll have a party as a part of our afternoon activities. Andrea said that it doesn't need to be anything fancy. Thanks.

I'm going to sign off and hand this to Daddy. He had an interesting day. He was called for jury duty and spent the afternoon going through the jury selection process. They never did draw his name out of the hat so he wasn't selected or eliminated, just sat and watched the proceedings.

[Dad] The council qualified in membership for the Chief Scout Executive's Winners Circle and in finance for the Kweo Award. These are major landmarks indicating the strength and health of a council and its personnel. So, with those qualifications, we can turn our attention to summer camps, Wood Badge, and getting ready for another push in membership.

Sue mentioned my brief experience with jury duty. When I was summoned, it was a bit of a surprise, because I don't think I have ever been summoned for jury duty before. The procedure was to call a certain phone number the night before and see whether we had to appear. There were two groups that were supposed to appear yesterday and the first group was dismissed, but my group was to appear. We were ushered into a courtroom and after everyone was there, we were shown a video regarding the process and our responsibility as jurors. Twenty names were drawn and they were seated in the order in which they were drawn and the judge began by introducing everyone from the court and then having each person stand and introduce themselves, their address, where they worked, their spouse and their employer.

Then he began asking questions requiring a yes or no answer. If anyone had a yes answer, then he would question them further and decide whether to dismiss them or not. The questions were trying to determine if any of the prospective jurors had a relationship with either of the law firms or individuals working for them or the parties of the law suit, or if serving on the jury for the balance of the week would work any hardship on us.

One juror who had an appointment with an eye specialist in Salt Lake Thursday was dismissed, because it had taken him 3 months to get in with the doctor and the appointment couldn't be readily rescheduled. As a juror was dismissed, another name was called from the pool to replace them, thus retaining twenty prospective jurors at all times. After the judge was through with his questions, each of the attorneys had about a half hour to further question the prospective jurors. Then they each had their peremptory challenges by secret ballot and the jury was selected and the rest of us were dismissed. An interesting process that took pretty much all afternoon.

The case was involving a suit by Schwann's for damages from the Department of Transportation of the State of Idaho for an accident that happened about three years ago where a Schwann's truck ran a stop sign and hit a car with several youth in it and one, a Herrick girl from Moreland, was killed. I am sure it would have been an interesting case to have been involved with.

Many of you would know Carolyn Cook Fife. Last week she was walking across a parking lot to work at the Portneuf Regional Hospital in Pocatello when she was hit by a speeding car and nearly killed. She was really beat up but miraculously without any internal organ damage. Kent called us and told us about the accident and we ended up going to Pocatello to see them on Sunday night.

We enjoyed staying at home and doing a few things around here for the Fourth weekend. Other than the omnipresent fireworks of neighbors, we didn't even experience any fireworks displays or

parades or anything. We were just a bunch of homebodies. .

July 30, 2004

[Mom] It seems like a long time since I last wrote. The last few weeks have been somewhat of a whirlwind with family visits, reunions, the Trek, and the Shakespearean festival, courtesy of you kids. Although our trip was rushed, we thoroughly enjoyed both "Taming of the Shrew" and "My Fair Lady." The performances were magnificent! Thank you for providing this fun get-away for us. Several of you have asked regarding other members of the family. Let me give a brief synopsis.

Steph and Linds's life has settled down a bit following all the youth conferences, visits from family, scout camp, and EFY for Katie.

Shauntel and Randy are enjoying Logan and Shauntel has enrolled Camille in a charter school that serves many of her ward members. Randy is getting licensed in all the states he will be working in via the internet. It has been time-consuming to get all the paperwork submitted.

Steve and Bonnie have their home on the market and are trying to keep their home ready to show. Anyone who has ever experienced this knows how nerve-wracking it can be.

We were grateful for the chance to have Dave and Andrea and family here following the Richards reunion at Bear Lake. Later this summer they will be joining Andrea's family for a trip to Yellowstone following our reunion at Little Lemhi.

Becky has been with the Seely's in West Jordan this past week. This has given her a chance to visit many of her old friends and to spend several hours with her dear friend, Kristen, whose little boy was run over and killed a couple months ago. She said it was so good to be able to sit down together and look at photos and have Kristen tell her about the events of the past weeks. I am sure it was very bittersweet. Chet is arriving on Friday and they will have a few days together before Becky heads back to Korea. Chet will be a few days behind her since he will be attending the Melaleuca Convention in Salt Lake for the week. Becky said the kids are ready to get back home and into their own routines again.

Hopefully all of you received the pictures from John and Laurel's trip to China. I called them Sunday night and visited with them about their adventures. I'm glad they had a chance to see it and know what they are getting into. I know it is going to be a tremendous challenge for the whole family! I am supportive of their decision but whenever I think about it, I get a heartache. It's just so far away!

Mike is in the Denver area fulfilling a five-week externship before going to Des Moines for another five-week period. When I visited with him, he was in a bit of a quandary regarding his housing. The place that was recommended was a home just a mile from the office where he will be practicing. When he arrived he found that it was a single woman, around 45, who lives in the home and just rents out a bedroom. She has done this for several years and helped the externs have housing close to their work, but it was a bit unnerving to be living with a woman as a housemate. Mike wasn't quite sure how he felt about the situation so he was doing some investigative work to see if there was any other possibility. Mark and Rita offered Jeff's room since he has moved out and is on his own now, but Mike wasn't sure if it would be an imposition on them. He also was uncertain as to the commute. He and Marci are still seeing one another but nothing is official. We will let everyone know when and if it becomes official.

Paul and Jenny returned safely to Wisconsin last Saturday. We appreciate all their efforts to spend some of their summer here with us.

Tim continues to do well with his job in Albuquerque. He is on the countdown, his last day of work being August 26th. I'm sure that feels good to know that he will have what he needs for another school year.

[Dad] The Trek was a tremendous success!! We had so many kids and adults that were really touched by the whole experience and powerful testimonies were acquired and borne. The many hours of preparation and attention to every detail paid off. I lead and walked the whole course and blew a horn every time we headed out after a trail stop or rest stop. I was getting threats on my signal horn before the first day was over.

On Sunday, our ward met outside for a Pioneer commemoration type meeting at Wray's. A couple of the youth were called on to report on the trek and bore powerful testimonies. And then that evening we had Stake Priesthood meeting and had Bruce Ellis and several young men bear their testimonies about the trek experience.

Christian Esplin's testimony was a classic as he talked about believing his parents and always

trying to do what is right and yet not knowing for sure the Church is true. On his solo experience, he came to know beyond any doubt and it was sweet to hear of his epiphany and affirmation. We also had the brass band play for the special musical number and that was gratifying after all the time and preparation.

We so enjoyed our Shakespeare Festival experience. The acting, staging, and everything was so professional and captivating. It was so relaxing to be there and enjoy a brief respite. The seven-hour drive to get there was dispatched with tapes and conversation about the Trek. We got home about 11:30 p.m. on Tuesday night.

August 4, 2004

[Mom] We are having quite a time living without our main computer. Isn't it amazing that 10 years ago a PC was a rarity and now I can't live without it. Hopefully Steve got our last week's letters forwarded and we aren't entirely shut off from things.

I have spent the last few days writing up a summary of our Trek and some of the things we would do differently if we did it again.

It feels good to have a couple weeks with nowhere to go. We've done some work in the garden and got the lawn irrigated. My flower bed was overrun with weeds and it felt good to have time to address that. Tomorrow we are hosting the Venturing Council Committee for an outdoor barbeque. We have certainly got a lot of good mileage out of Steph's famous chicken recipe! We are also going to serve new potatoes, cukes and zucchini from the garden and make some homemade ice cream. It's never as fun to entertain friends as it is family, but the original hosts were unable to do it and Daddy volunteered our place.

Yesterday in testimony meeting Bishop Godfrey mentioned that after a consultation it was decided to take him off of the treatments and not intervene anymore. He is so thin and weak and has been horribly ill with the chemo. All of the family were gathered for a grandson's baptism and a grandbaby's blessing so it was a bittersweet occasion for the whole family. Bishop Godfrey has looked so yellow and frail. He has started having a lot of discomfort. Our prayers are with him and Brenda.

Tomorrow SaraKay will be floating the Snake with the YM and YW. Randy does this every summer for the youth of the ward. SaraKay is so excited about it since she hasn't been old enough until this year. The bad news is that it was announced that next week our bishopric will be changed! Bishop Jenks has been such a wonderful friend to the youth that it will be hard to see him released.

[Dad] Last night's hosting of the Venturing Committee was a great success! They loved the chicken, potatoes, and homemade ice cream, and the salads brought by the others were wonderful. All in all everything was wonderful--thanks to Sue's hosting talents.

Yes, it is true that we are changing bishopric in the Moreland 6th ward on Sunday. I can assure you that the new bishop will be a great friend to the youth like Bishop Jenks has been.

On Saturday we got our yard work done and went to Krupp Scout Hollow and inventoried the Wood Badge clothing and brought down the money in the Trading Post for the World Friendship Fund. Friday night we went for a night out. The three of us went to the Texas Roadhouse in Idaho Falls--had a great meal, and then went to the movie, "The Terminal."

Thursday I met with Mike Marchese, my immediate supervisor, and reviewed the meeting content for Tuesday while we were in Cedar City. He held my quarterly review and was very complimentary of what I have accomplished in my service area and the efforts to help the Council over the top in qualifying for both Kweo and Winner's Circle by the end of June.

August 11, 2004

[Mom] This week and another four-day session in two weeks and Daddy will be through with Wood Badge for another year. His job really keeps him on the go, but I think he is appreciated and enjoys the association with so many fine scouters. SaraKay and I are nearly through with shopping for her school clothes and supplies. She is excited for the upcoming year!

The other night we talked through her commitments and she decided to try Cross Country for a season. Although she loves basketball, she is one of 16 girls who played on two teams last year and she found out that there is only one Freshman team of nine girls and she feels like there is a good chance that she won't make the team. I guess we'll see how she gets along with running. Coach Ed Jackson runs a great program and there are several of SaraKay's friends who are on the team.

Sunday afternoon Daddy and I were making phone calls and we commented that there was a funny smell outside. About 9:30 we were heading into bed and I smelled it again and commented on it. SaraKay said that when she was downstairs watching TV on Saturday that she had heard a sound like water running. Daddy and I raced downstairs and discovered, to our horror, that a small pipe on the water heater had sprung a leak and was spraying water all over the furnace room. The carpet was wet for about 10 ft into the family room! What a nightmare! We immediately turned off the water, began cleaning up the standing water in the furnace room and spread towels out on the soaked carpet. I was just heartsick. We haven't had a water problem for a long time. We have been so careful with our irrigating so that we wouldn't ruin our new carpet.

Monday morning we rented a carpet cleaner and spent several hours vacuuming up all the water we could draw out of the rug. We got nearly two gallons out. Now we have a space heater and big fan running and hopefully we will be successful in getting it dried out without pulling up the carpet. This is the reason we would have a hard time leaving this big home and yard when we go on a mission. There are just too many things that could go wrong. I know SaraKay felt badly that she hadn't mentioned the noise to us sooner. We so seldom go downstairs anymore that we just weren't aware of what was happening.

John and Laurel are in the throes of selling their home and working through details of their departure. I will be flying out to help when they return from their trip to SLC for Grant's wedding on September 10th. They are planning to rent a car and visit the Provo bunch on Sept. 11th and 12th, flying home on the 13th for their final few days in Michigan.

Mike and Marci are meeting halfway this weekend for a few days together. Tim is more than ready to head for home on the 26th and get situated in Provo. Becky and bunch are safely back to Korea and the kids are in school. Jenny's due date is drawing nigh. Our prayers are with her. Next weekend Grandpa Larsen has been invited to attend the 100th birthday party of the original Blackfoot Stake and be an honored guest as a past stake president. It will be fun to go with him for that event.

August 18, 2004

[Mom] As you can see, we are still using Dad's laptop. He is convinced that we are dealing with a virus and not a mechanical problem and that with a little time, he will be able to solve the problem. As usual, time is a rare commodity. He spent some time on it yesterday since he is on vacation this week, but vacation or not, he has a meeting this morning in Idaho Falls and other responsibilities to attend to. The fair and Tiger Ear are on the horizon. Where does the time go?

SaraKay just left for her first day of school. She has had several days of Cross-Country practice already but the official beginning is today. She is excited! I am looking forward to having our daily regimen and schedule back. This past summer has been so busy! It has been good to have some time with each of you and feel like we've had our dose of family for another year.

Monday at Downata was fun. We had Steph and kids, Shauntel and two, Stephen and four, and David and three. We arrived about noon and had most of the facilities to ourselves until about three. Monday is a great time to plan our party since most people are still recovering from the weekend and the crowds are down. The big hit of the day was the water slide that wound its way down the hillside. The kids must have gone down the slide 30-40 times apiece. Daddy and I even tried our hand at it. I enjoyed the ride, it was just the four-story steps that got to me.

It was fun to see the cousins together. At one point I looked down at the deep end of the pool and saw Katie, Sam, Josh, SaraKay, Laurel, AnnaSue, and Nate all together swimming around. I was grateful that they didn't inherit my swimming genes. I have always felt helpless in the water. Rachel, Camille and Chrissy are also swimmers and pretty independent in the water. When we finally got out of the pool it was nearly four-thirty. The kids continued playing until we had supper fixed. I couldn't believe the energy level!

It was an added treat for us to have Dave and Andrea spend Sunday and Monday night with us. They left yesterday to spend a couple days at Yellowstone Park with Andrea's brother, Mark, and his family. They will return on Friday to Boise. Andrea was struggling with morning sickness. The baby is due in March and Andrea is right in the middle of the worst of the sickness. Hopefully as she progresses, she won't have the nausea to deal with. Those of us who have experienced it can empathize.

I am anxious to visit with Mike about his weekend. He and Marci were each driving to Fort Collins, CO and having a couple days over the weekend to be

together. They were trying to figure out how to pull this off since they have no family there and probably would need to stay in a campground. Fort Collins was about 4 hours from both Denver and Salt Lake and that seemed doable. Mike has appreciated the time to bond with Mark as his roommate and help out with home improvement projects while Rita and Jessica visit in Utah and Idaho.

JoEllen is engaged to a young man from the Twin Falls area and will be getting married December 22nd in Salt Lake. I guess her summer in Provo was successful in more ways than one! Mike is nearly through with this rotation and will be heading to Des Moines next week. Tim has just a week left before leaving for Provo. Chet is finishing his Masters up this month. Becky is looking forward to having him a little more accessible with that pressure gone. It has been a long haul and we're proud of him. Randy has received his licensing and will be starting this week.

[Dad] It was interesting to me that when we showed up at Downata that no in-laws came. We definitely missed Linds, Randy, Bonnie and Andrea but had a great time with all of us that were there. Downata is a good halfway gathering point that we need to keep in mind for other holidays and occasions. Jared went down the slide so many times that he wore his way through his swim suit. The kids were running up the steps and down the slide just as fast as they could go for hours. What a great time!

Wood Badge last week was absolutely wonderful. We have some incredible people on our course. Besides regular Scouting leaders, we have a stake president, several Bishops and high councilors. We have a few people who came because of the three credit hours of CE credit from ISU for teachers and educators. My Scout's Own worship service was great. I had a trumpet and French horn duet accompany the first song, "How Great Thou Art," a fun skit, good poems and thoughts, guitar accompanying "Let There Be Peace On Earth," and a flute trio accompanying the last song, "Where Can I Turn for Peace."

I used my peace poem again: "If you stand very still in the heart of the wood, you will hear many wonderful things--the snap of a twig, the wind in the trees, and the whirr of invisible wings. If you stand very still in the turmoil of life and wait for the voice from within-- you'll be led down the quiet pathways of wisdom and truth in a mad world of chaos and din. If you stand very still and hold to your faith, you will get all the help that you ask. You will draw from the silence the things that you need--hope and courage and strength for your task."

August 24, 2004

[Mom] Well, we finally have our computer back! Hip, Hip, Hooray! After spending some frustrating time working on it, Daddy called Bishop Blight and had him take it for repairs. When he returned it, he said that we had the distinct honor of having more viruses than any computer he had ever fixed. Wow! Really, we had just a few but he told us that we should not underestimate the problem. He said it would be like a doctor saying to a patient, "Don't worry, you only have two diseases, smallpox and polio!" Anyway, we are overjoyed to have it working and grateful that we didn't have to invest in another one.

SaraKay started school last Wednesday and is enjoying her first week in high school. This morning I had to run an errand at the Middle School and as I entered the school it seemed like it was only yesterday when SaraKay was a student there. She is running on the cross-country team and that, along with school, has kept her pretty busy. It is amazing that after just a week of practice, she is able to run for a couple miles! It would take me months of conditioning to do that. She has several good friends on the team and has even spotted a couple of upperclassmen who are adding a lot of interest to their daily practice time. At a dance Friday night she got to dance with some of the guys she has come to know and that was really a payoff.

On Friday we attended a 100th Year Celebration sponsored by the Blackfoot Stake. They were having a dramatic presentation at the Nuart, recounting the history of the first LDS Stake in Blackfoot. Because of Allan's involvement as the stake president for several years, the present stake presidency invited him to attend. We picked him up about four, brought him home for a haircut and supper, and then went to the program. AlvaLu met us at the Nuart and we thoroughly enjoyed the evening together. It was very sweet to be there and watch the people greet Grandpa. He has a lot of friends and acquaintances from years gone by and it was great to share that experience with him. He certainly looked spiffy in his Sunday best.

Daddy took part of last week off and I enjoyed having him around. Wednesday evening, he asked if I would like to spend part of Thursday in the temple. I agreed and the next morning after

getting SaraKay off to school, we went to the temple and caught the 9:00 am session. Afterwards we had lunch and then came home after making a stop at Sam's Club for groceries.

Tim has his last day tomorrow and will head for home on Wednesday. He hopes to get moved into his apartment, buy his books and take care of other commitments in Provo before continuing on and spending the weekend with us. SaraKay is overjoyed. She gets lonely for her siblings. Although Daddy has Wood Badge this week, he has so many other commitments that he is going to be driving back and forth almost every day. On Wednesday night he has three places that he is supposed to be. On Thursday he has been asked to speak at a Seminary devotional during the lunch hour. He felt honored to be asked.

Our thoughts and prayers are with all of you. David said that their trip to Yellowstone turned out to be a wonderfully relaxing get-away for their family and Andrea got along pretty well despite her morning sickness. Mike is spending his last week with Mark and Rita and will move to Des Moines this weekend. We so appreciate their goodness and hospitality to him these past weeks. John said on chat last night that they have sold their two cars and maybe even their home last week. That would be such a blessing to them if they could leave with the loose ends taken care of. Randy has started his work and spent a couple nights last week reading films. As he completes his licensing, the workload will increase.

I received a phone call Saturday from Paul. Before he could tell me why he had called, I guessed that Jenny had had the baby. No, sorry to say, she hadn't but he promised to keep us posted. It really isn't due until the 5th of September but who knows when he will choose to arrive. I need to warn Paul that he can't call and not get us excited at this stage of the game.

[Dad] It was hard to shift gears and get back to work yesterday after having last week off. My vacation last week was interrupted by a management staff meeting on Wednesday and a few other errands. It was really nice to go to the temple together on Thursday. I am always amazed at how many of our friends are workers in the temple. Our life is much different than many of our peers because of raising a teenager. SaraKay said one of her teachers commented yesterday that she knew most of the student's parents, but not SaraKay's. She said, "Well, he is older..."

The theme of the seminary event that I have been asked to speak at on Thursday is, "Miracle on the Mount." They want to focus on the miracle of testimony. All of the high school is invited to come to the seminary building for lunch and then sit on the hill outside and have a guest speaker---me, talk to them for 15 to 20 minutes. I thought I would orient my talk around several key elements of my testimony and how I felt when I received them. First, reading the Book of Mormon for the first time at age 14 and putting it to the test and coming to know that it is true and hence, Joseph Smith is a prophet. Coming to know the Savior loves me and feeling his arms around me during the sacrament as I visited Sue's ward one Sunday before we were married. Standing with my priesthood quorum in a solemn assembly to sustain a new president of the church and receiving the confirmation that he was indeed a prophet–with Joseph Fielding Smith, Harold B. Lee, Spencer W. Kimball, Ezra Taft Benson, Howard W. Hunter, and Gordon B. Hinckley. Praying to know whether to come back to the farm at Dad's invitation and coming to know that God knows my name and was willing to direct my path to best serve Him. Receiving the confirmation that my call as Bishop, in the Mission Presidency, and to the Stake Presidency were from Him. And so on. And I thought I would emphasize the importance of learning to recognize the still small voice of the Spirit in their lives, not being "past feeling," and making time to ponder and feel the direction and confirmation of the Lord.

August 31, 2004

[Mom] Well, the big news of the week was the birth of Benjamin Cutler Larsen, born about 12:30 p.m. on Saturday, August 28th. Both Jenny and baby are doing fine. I suspect that they are coming home either today or tomorrow so it's going to be a bit hectic for a few weeks into the new semester but what a relief to have it over and have everything okay. I think Jenny's mom is going to visit and help for a few days and that will be so nice. Congratulations!

Daddy spent part of last week at Wood Badge and came home Saturday afternoon marveling at the wonderful people and the quality program that was presented. The only disadvantage was that he wasn't here for part of the time that Tim was home and he hated missing all the visiting.

It was so nice to have Tim around for a few days. He took care of some business such as getting his license renewed and also found time to visit

Grandpa Larsen. It was quite a shock to Tim when he went into the room and awakened Grandpa to have him open his eyes, say, "Tim?" and then proceed with this question, "How's your romance going?" That was one of three times he asked Tim. (No, I didn't pay Grandpa to do that!) Anyway, it was nice for them to get some time together to talk jobs, politics, and yes, romances.

Before we left the care center, Jeanie called from Show Low with the news that David had just received his call to serve in the Caracus, Venezuela Mission. They were excited and pleased. (Jeremy told us that David had several offers for football scholarships but that he had made the decision to serve a mission and see what happened when he got home.)

On Friday afternoon we went to SaraKay's first cross country meet at the high school. We arrived in time for the huddle and team cheer and then they were off for the three- and one-half mile race. They were to run around the fence line of the track and football field, proceed to the junior high field, following the fence line and run that route three times. So we stood by the fence and cheered her on each time she came around again. It was a hot day and all the kids looked so exhausted that it was hard to be there to witness it all. SaraKay was a little behind the middle group. When it was over, we thought that every one of them were winners for completing the course. SaraKay didn't feel like a winner, but we were proud of her.

Later that evening Tim took her to dinner and they went over some tips for improvement. The next morning the team had a three-mile run and then breakfast at the Thompson's. When SaraKay got home we asked her how she got along and she said that she had come in first of all the girls. We, being the supportive and loving family that we are, commented, "You did not!" "I did!" "No way!"

Well, to make a long story short, when she started the race she decided to try to keep pace with one of her friends and she ran right alongside her and then beat her in the sprint at the end. SaraKay said it was easier to run in the cool of the morning after a good night's rest and that she tried to follow Tim's advice and take longer strides. It made quite a difference. We all had a good laugh over our total disbelief. It has been fun to watch her enthusiasm grow and amazing to see her stamina increase over the last two weeks.

One of the things that Tim wanted to do while he was home was to get together with his cousin, Jacob. He tried several times to reach him but ISU started last Monday and he was involved in that. Saturday morning Jacob called and mentioned that Jeremy, Jeanie's son, was visiting from St. George and that they wanted to go to the temple Saturday afternoon. They decided to come here for lunch, go to the temple and then go visit Grandpa. We thoroughly enjoyed their short visit. What a handsome group of guys. Tim warned them that they needed to be prepared when they went to visit Grandpa because he would probably ask them about their love life. They both agreed that there wasn't much to tell.

Speaking of cousins, we received word that Staff and Kathy's daughter, Jennifer, was married last Friday to a young man that she met a while ago. He is going to be a wonderful addition to their family! His parents were visiting from back East for the week and they decided to tie the knot while some of his family was there. We are so happy for Jenn and send them our best wishes.

We've enjoyed watching some of the Olympics these past two weeks. It's a wonderful thing to have the nations of the world come together and to see the goodness and talent sprinkled throughout the world. Hope each of you were able to catch some of it.

[Dad] Today was a long day of staff meetings. One of the things discussed was our benefits program and changes that are coming next year. One of the biggest things that came through was that we are going to have to be more proactive in managing our healthcare and medical needs--inquiring about pricing, questioning procedures, evaluating whether we could use a generic or similar drug to accomplish the same purpose. The co-pay, deductibles, and co-insurance will have built incentives to reward effective management.

Yesterday was a good Sunday and it was nice to have some time with Tim before he left for Provo. I also went in to church with Dad at the Extended Care Facility and had a good visit with him while waiting for Rick after church.

From Thursday afternoon on I was at Wood Badge and renewed my enthusiasm and commitment to that wonderful and inspired program. The group we had were an extraordinary group of leaders and it was remarkable how they came together as patrols and as a troop and the great experiences they had while there. I know the ripple effects of this training will influence many hundreds of boys as these leaders complete their tickets and provide a better-quality program for those under

their stewardship. The course for September is bumping 60 participants and Elder & Sister Hillam will be there for part of the course because their son, Rodney, is the course director.

Thursday morning looked pretty threatening but cleared up for the seminary "Miracle on the Mount." There were a lot of kids there to eat the sloppy joes and chips for a free lunch and then to listen to me. I started out by blowing my horn that I had used on the trek and then tied into the spiritual experiences and miracles we witnessed on the trek.

From there I followed the outlines of personal spiritual experiences that I outlined last week beginning with reading the Book of Mormon for the first time at age 14 and putting it to the test and coming to know it is true and that Joseph Smith is a prophet. My first Sunday at Ricks I slept in and didn't go to church. That afternoon the college ward bishopric came around visiting and the Bishop said to me, "Steve, you should know better!" I did know better, and I knew that Heavenly Father knew that I knew better and his statement really pierced my soul and I have never missed a meeting since without a compelling reason.

Shortly after my mission, I was courting Susan Richards and visited her sacrament meeting one Sunday because she was speaking. During the Sacrament I was really focusing on the Savior and the meaning of the sacrament and the atonement and what He had endured for me and felt such an overpowering feeling of His love as though his arms were wrapped around me. I know that Jesus lives, that He died for us and that He is my Savior.

I can remember as an eight-year-old boy attending General Conference when David O. McKay was sustained as President of the Church and shaking his hand and having the spiritual witness that he was a prophet. I have had a similar witness with each President of the Church since then as I have stood in solemn assemblies with my priesthood quorums and sustained them as Prophet, Seers, and Revelators and President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. What a blessing it is to have spiritual witnesses to build one's testimony line upon line and to KNOW.

After a couple of other examples, I concluded with reminding them of 1 Nephi 17:45 and some of the things in our lives that make us past feeling that we cannot feel when God speaks to us--that he will tell us in our minds and in our hearts the things that we need to know to pass the crucial junctures in our lives.

September 9, 2004

[Mom] Last Tuesday evening Janet Jenks and I drove to Logan for a quick visit. Earlier in August Shauntel asked if I would consider helping her learn to can peaches. I agreed and asked my good friend, Janet Jenks, if she would like to ride with me since I knew that she had both Jared and Ryan living there attending USU. She was delighted and mentioned that she had a car to return to Ryan. He has been driving theirs while his was being fixed. So, the two of us left here about six and had an enjoyable trip together. That morning after Shauntel took Camille to school, she and Arch went to an orchard in Brigham City and picked several boxes of peaches. It turned out to be quite a project for them but the peaches were delicious and ready to be put in bottles Wednesday morning as we had hoped.

With both of us working on them we had about 20+ bottles filled before noon but the processing was the challenge. Her stove has different hot plates than we were accustomed to and we just couldn't get the water in the canner to heat enough to come to a rolling boil. Finally, we decided to process them in hot water and forget the rolling boil and we barely finished up before I was ready to leave at 4:30. Thank goodness we moved ahead since I needed to bring my supplies back with me to do my peaches the next day. We also did some frozen peaches that were from a recipe Shaunnie's friend had given her. Although we were pooped by the time we finished, we were delighted with the finished product. It has been a treat to have Shauntel and Randy closer! Hopefully their business will soon be up and going and they can have their decision confirmed in regards to his employment.

We appreciated the cute pictures and info regarding Benjamin. Thank you, Paul and Jenny, for keeping us all in touch with what's happening in your household. I'm grateful that Laurie will be able to make the trip and spend some time with you, helping everyone with the adjustment. We were also pleased to hear that Paul's summer's work has yielded some good results and that his professor was pleased with his efforts. We hope that Jenny's job as seminary teacher will be manageable and rewarding.

Grandma Ilene arrived Thursday evening with Chad. He had offered to bring her and then pick her up en route to Salt Lake this morning on his

return trip. He is meeting this morning in Rexburg with the temple committee. He shared with us some of the concerns the committee has. The temple, which was originally going to be a smaller temple, has been upgraded to a larger one because of the population base and donations. The concern is that the Rexburg temple shouldn't upstage the Idaho Falls Temple and draw attendance away from it. He said that there are some new features that they are going to try to include in the design such as having the waiting area overlook the baptistry so that as patrons are standing waiting for family following a session, they can see the baptistry and the work going on there. He has really enjoyed the opportunity to sit in on the discussions and secretly hopes that his involvement in this temple may enable him to be considered for building the temple at Far West when the time comes for that. Awesome!

Friday morning Deniece and I gave Mom a perm and then had lunch together. We had such a great time! We got to laughing so hard as one joke led to another. Mom had a date with Wright that afternoon and then again on Saturday as they went to the fair for a few hours. SaraKay helped Daddy in the Tiger Ear booth that afternoon so I had some quiet time and started into a project that I have been meaning to get going. Sunday Daddy left early for his meetings and then spent most of the day at the booth. He has been struggling with a bad cold and cough and the last few days it has gone into his eyes and he is miserable. He was going to get everything delivered to the booth first thing and then get to the doctor.

Yesterday Deniece, Bradley, and Carolee arrived about 10:00. Deniece, Grandma, and I had a wonderful morning visiting together. Daddy came home and laid down for a while before tackling the task of mowing. Wright arrived about 1:00 and we visited and finished getting things ready for supper. By four, Curtis, Marie, and Mariah had arrived from the fair, bringing with them SaraKay and her bunch. Daddy barbequed hamburgers and made ice cream and we sat down to a delicious meal. I couldn't help thinking how sweet it has been to have Deniece and her family live closer these past two years. They are such a delight and Bradley and Carolee are great cousins for SaraKay.

My thoughts and prayers have been with John and Laurel as they sort through an accumulation of three years of living. I'm sure that at times it has been overwhelming. They will be flying in to SLC on Thursday evening and attending the festivities associated with Grant's wedding. Saturday they will have lunch at Shauntel's and then proceed to the park for visiting with the Logan crowd. Tim is trying to work things out so that he can attend the picnic, too. Sunday afternoon we will be going to Logan so that Daddy and SaraKay can say their goodbyes. If all goes as planned, I will fly out Monday morning with John and family and spend four days with them, helping with the kids while they do the final packing.

I haven't heard from Mike since he arrived in Des Moines. He is in his second week of externship and hopefully he is enjoying it as much as he did his stay in Denver. I'm not sure what his living arrangements are and that will have an impact on his overall experience. Tim is back in the swing of things and he feels like this semester won't be quite as tough as his last two were. Of course, he is following the football team closely and was overjoyed with the win over Notre Dame. (So was I).

September 22, 2004

[Mom] My thoughts and prayers have been with John and Laurel and family since I arrived home Friday morning. They were scheduled to leave Detroit early Saturday morning, arrive in Vancouver five hours later, and then continue on for a 13-hour transpacific flight to Hong Kong where they will have a couple hours layover before flying to Chongqing, arriving about 24 hours after their initial departure. I'm sure that it is going to be a difficult trip, but they were in good spirits when we said our goodbyes on Thursday night and they were ready for their great adventure! John said that the hotel they will reside in has internet access and computers and that they will email us as soon as they get their bearings and catch their breath.

It was very touching for me to share last week with them. As some of you know, I have been having some problems with my right foot and I worried that I would be more of a liability than an asset, but my part of the work was to keep James and Eliza entertained in the hotel room while Emma attended school and John and Laurel finished up the sorting. It was a perfect job for me since I felt a need to have some bonding time with the grandkids.

On Monday when we arrived, John and Laurel got us settled in at the hotel and they worked until almost midnight preparing things for the movers who were scheduled to arrive Tuesday. Later they

commented that they were so grateful that they had been prepared because the movers came and went through like a whirlwind, packing everything in sight.

Each noon and evening we would go out for dinner and then James and Eliza and I would sleep in one room and John and Laurel and Emma shared the other suite. They were up and gone early each day, but my bunch kept the blinds drawn and slept in, taking a leisurely breakfast, courtesy of the hotel. Our rooms had couches and small kitchenettes so it was very comfortable. We watched a lot of Scooby Doo and Action Hero cartoons, but I guess that is alright when we are in transition and trying to keep everyone occupied and happy. Eliza and James were easy to work with and we read, colored, did puzzles, drew pictures, and had a great time.

Wednesday evening after the kids were all asleep, John and Laurel joined me in my room and we talked about their plans and feelings about this venture. John filled me in on how Ford and the partnering Chinese company operate and helped me understand a little better what his situation will be. I really appreciated that time with them since usually when we get together there isn't time for quiet talks.

On Thursday night after scriptures and family prayer, I said my goodbyes to the kids before they went to bed because I knew that I had to leave about 5:30 Friday morning and that they would still be asleep. I got through the farewells okay, but later as I kissed James goodnight, I had this overwhelming sad feeling grip me and I had a good cry. So, the word on the street is that no other Larsen families can go foreign until we get some of these families home!

I appreciated Dad and SaraKay being such good sports about my trip. It was homecoming week and there were activities almost every day so it kept Daddy on the run to tie up loose ends from his previous week at the Tiger Ear booth and also see that SaraKay was accounted for.

Last Sunday we made a quick trip to Logan to give Daddy a chance to see John and Laurel one last time before their departure. Steph was hostess and we really appreciated all she and Linds did to make it such a memorable experience. Before leaving for home, Daddy gave John a father's blessing and participated when John gave one to Laurel. I thought about that blessing on Monday morning when we arose at 5:00 a.m. to get ready for our trip to the SLC airport and our flights back to Michigan. Just before we left Steph's, Eliza threw up.

John had been sick with the flu on Thursday evening and apparently Eliza now had it. All the way to the airport she was throwing up and Laurel was doing her best to keep her clean and comfortable. I kept thinking about how difficult the trip would be with Eliza unable to hold anything down. Upon arrival we checked in and had a couple hours to wait before our departure time. It was surely a small miracle that Eliza never threw up again and never was sick for the duration of the week. Anyone who has flown with kids can appreciate what a blessing it was to have her feeling better.

On Friday Daddy picked Grandpa up early from the care center and took him to Karen and Jim's in Layton en route to Salt Lake. Then he came to get me and we both returned to have an enjoyable lunch date at Karen and Jim's. We sat out on their patio and enjoyed our meal together as well as getting a tour of their beautiful new home. It is such a lovely, roomy home. Karen has Grandma Barbara's knack of putting things together to create beauty and functionality. About one that afternoon we headed for home and returned Grandpa to the care center. I think he not only enjoyed the chance to see Jim and Karen and their situation, but I think he enjoyed the trip and traveling a road that he has traveled many times before. He commented on some of the sights along the way and I was glad that it had all worked out for him to go with us. We appreciated Karen's hospitality.

Sunday in sacrament meeting it was announced that this Sunday our stake is holding a special meeting to announce ward boundary changes. The growth in parts of the stake have created a disparity in numbers in the various wards and so the stake presidency decided to do some boundary changes and equalize things. Of course, everyone is wondering and talking and worrying about whether they will be affected and how. SaraKay is especially worried that some of her close friends and she will be separated. I'm amazed at how these changes force us to get out of our comfort zones.

SaraKay started in harvest yesterday but the rain has kept them from getting much done. She is glad to have a job but wishes that she had a friend on the crew. Hopefully the weather will improve. Tonight it is supposed to get down to 27

degrees! I've covered my tomatoes and need to get out tomorrow and get them picked.

[Dad] With Sue gone, it was a frenetic week. With meetings, appointments, and places to be and things to do it was a real challenge to keep up with transporting SaraKay and finding time for meals and things. But we made it and had the house clean and most of the laundry done and all the dishes done for when she came home.

At stake Bishop's meeting on Wednesday night, we announced the boundary changes without detail and gave the Bishops a letter from the Stake Presidency inviting everyone to a meeting next Sunday night at 6:00 to find out about the details, with instructions to read the letter in sacrament meeting last Sunday. It had been such a well-kept secret that it was like someone had sucked all the air out of the room when President Shipley made the announcement. On Sunday, when I went to church with Dad at the ECF I found out that the Blackfoot Stake is doing the same thing with a meeting at the same time next Sunday but creating a new ward in the process. It has been nine years since the last major change in ward boundaries in our stake.

It is wonderful to have Tiger Ears finished for another year. We had the best year ever--over $10,000 better than any previous year. It was a challenge to keep up with things and to fill some of the shifts. We really only had to scramble once to fill shifts where people hadn't shown that were assigned. We had a lot of good publicity this year and excellent weather which all contributed to our success. Well, I had better go. We just got an email from John that they arrived safely. He said that when they arrived, they were met by a reception committee from the hotel and the plant where he will be working and they are really feeling at home already.

September 28, 2004

[Mom] I just finished reading Laurel's family letter, written after their first week in China. What a relief to know that they are safe and sound. I could identify with Emma and James attending a small school. When I was in first grade my family moved to a ranch in the Black Hills. We lived in a remote area and I attended a one room schoolhouse. I was the only first grader and there was a total of eight students, two being the twins of the teacher. I felt so pampered and thoroughly enjoyed the chance to progress at my own speed. We rode horses to school and were like a big family. Hopefully that will be the case for the Larsen's of Chongqing.

Last Monday spud harvest began. SaraKay has a job with Richard Tominaga. We felt very fortunate that she could find a job since many farmers don't hire underaged youth. JoAnn Tominaga arranged for SaraKay to carpool with other high school kids on the crew. The only problem has been that all the other kids on the crew are boys! I thought that this would be a fun experience for her but it has been just the opposite. She feels so awkward riding back and forth from work with a carload of boys. She has felt that all of them are "cool" and she isn't, and that she is tagging along like an unwanted little sister.

Each night when she would arrive home, I would expect her to say, "It was fun today! I am getting to feel more at ease with the crew." But that wasn't the case. Each night when she would arrive home, she would be so discouraged and down about how alone she felt. Most of the crew are older men who drive the trucks or Mexicans who can barely speak English. She would work for hours without much interaction and come home dreading the days ahead.

When she first started complaining about it, we made it a matter of prayer. Daddy and I both made suggestions of things she could do or say that might relieve the tension. Nothing seemed to help. I substituted for her on Friday afternoon so that she could run in a cross-country meet. She was disappointed in her performance at the meet and hurt her hip during the race. She felt that it was partly due to that fact that she had been working all week and couldn't attend the practices. Most of her friends aren't working and she felt that they were all having a great time while she was out working.

After substituting for her Friday, I could see the situation and why she was feeling isolated. We talked through a few more ideas and I offered to take her to work the next morning if that would help her out. She was so discouraged and so was I. Again, we made it a matter of prayer.

Last night I was at the Women's Broadcast when she got home. When I got home and spotted her cooler and gear, I was anxious to visit with her about how her day had gone. She was in good spirits and had had a good day. She had changed areas and started working at the place where they unload the trucks. There was more activity and visiting and one of the female truck drivers offered to carpool with her. Just those two little changes

made the difference and she was happy and willing to carry on and finish out the harvest. I knew that we had received help from the Lord in solving these problems and I have been so grateful for it.

Yesterday Daddy spent the day working in the yard and garden. We froze the last of our corn, harvested most of our tomatoes, dug spuds, and trimmed the flowers in the front of the house. It was fun to see things getting done and feel fall in the air. I love the changing of the seasons and the smell of a good pot of soup simmering for supper.

We will be leaving early Saturday morning to attend General Conference. Hopefully we can meet Mike and Marci there as well as Tim that evening and have some time together. It will be a rushed trip but fun to see Mike and Tim and get an update from them on things. Tonight, our stake is having a meeting at six to announce the realignment of ward boundaries. They announced it last week and since then everyone has been anxious and speculating on where the lines will be. Changes are good!

[Dad] Last week was a busy one with lots of meetings and school presentations to try to get to the few kids that are not LDS and not already in Cub Scouts. Friday night was a joining night at Pack 262's pack meeting. It was held at the Catholic Fellowship Hall and was an old-time fair with lots of activities, apples & caramel, and cotton candy. It was a lot of fun and I signed up eight new kids.

It was a treat to have a Saturday free of outside commitments and to work in the garden and the yard. It is always a big job to clear off the com stalks and vines and get the garden ready to till for another year. We are excited about our harvest party in two weeks and doing cider.

Sunday was a full day with all our morning meetings, regular church meetings, going to Church with Dad, signing recommends, the boundary change meeting, and setting apart the new bishopric for Moreland First Ward and a new counselor in Moreland 4th. One of the new counselors in Moreland 1st is Cass Baldwin. His father died about 6 months ago and he asked me to ordain him a High Priest. I felt honored and humbled by that request. It was almost 9:00 by the time I walked home.

When I went to Church with Dad, I bore my testimony and remarked on the fact that I had been thinking about my third son's first Sunday in China--that they were worshipping as a family and were the only members in a city of 33 million people. How blessed we are to live in a land where the Church is so prominent and we have opportunities to worship with many saints around us each Sunday regardless of what ward or congregation we are in. It is a blessing to be able to draw strength from the many friends and relatives who we worship with. But I also know that the scripture is true that reminds us that where two or three are met together in the Savior's name, there he will be also. I know John and Laurel will be strengthened by the presence of the Savior in their meetings as they meet each Sabbath.

Last night for FHE we went out to where SaraKay was working and got several bags of potatoes from Richard Tominaga. We then stayed and worked picking rock for about an hour and a half. He told us we didn't have to do that--but I said it was nice to work on the belt and not have to worry about keeping everything running and meeting the payroll at the end of harvest. For that short amount of time, I felt like I kept up my speed and my reflexes were pretty good on the belt. We visited with a couple of Mexicans that were working on the sorter and to refresh some of my limited Spanish. All in all, it was a fun home evening.

October 5, 2004

[Mom] It's a beautiful fall day today, complete with gorgeous red and orange foliage and a slight nip in the air. SaraKay returned to school this morning, happy to have harvest successfully completed and some money in the bank. Her last day at work was Friday since we were going to conference Saturday and she had received permission from her boss to miss work. Although Richard isn't completely through with all his fields, the worst of the fields were harvested last week and he was okay with the kids going back to school and letting the adults finish up.

We have had wonderful weather except for an occasional rainstorm and Daddy and I have gotten things harvested from our garden. This Saturday Shauntel and Randy and Steve and Bonnie will be coming to help with the apple juice project and we will send back some produce and potatoes for them and Steph and Linds.

Our weekend in Salt Lake was great. We left here at 6:00 Saturday morning and arrived at the Conference Center about 9. Since we only had 2 tickets, I went to the Joseph Smith Building and

Daddy and SaraKay attended in the Center. Following conference, we met at the north end of the reflection pool and awaited the arrival of Mike and Marci. Mike flew into Salt Lake Friday night and he and Marci spent part of Saturday morning driving up Provo Canyon.

As a part of that leisurely get away Mike popped the question and when they arrived at our prearranged location, Marci held out her hand for us to see her ring finger. There, perched on her fourth finger was a large metal ring which flashed red and green when activated. Thank goodness the actual engagement ring was in Marci's purse and quickly surfaced when we expressed disappointment. The wedding is scheduled for December 30th in the Bountiful Temple. As of this writing, we will host an open house on December 28th here.

Saturday afternoon we watched conference from our motel room and then Daddy, Tim, and Mike attended the priesthood session together. Following that we all watched the BYU/CSU football game. What a fun evening! When the game was over, Mike and Marci left for her home in Bountiful and we went to bed. The next morning we attended the morning session of conference and left for home shortly thereafter and caught the afternoon session en route.

Tim is enjoying his studies this semester. He is interviewing in Salt Lake on Wednesday for a winter semester internship. He would appreciate your faith and prayers in his behalf for this interview. If he gets the job, he will keep his apartment in Provo and ride the bus back and forth each day. There were other businesses he applied to that he had hoped to get interviews with, but they didn't come through for him.

This morning I received a call from John and Laurel. The reception was so good that it was as if they were in the next room. They still have not received their air shipment and so they don't have use of their PC, although there are computers in the hotel that they have access to. John said that they were inspired in their choice of what to put into their five suitcases that arrived when they did. Although they only have a few items, they have managed alright despite the delayed shipment. They love their spacious apartment and the hotel staff has been very sweet and accommodating. John has only worked a total of four days since arriving since the last five days have been a Chinese national holiday. Unfortunately, they all have had bronchitis and have been on antibiotics. The doctor that treats the hotel residents is very nice and is from Paraguay. It has been very handy to have him residing right in their hotel.

Perhaps the most disconcerting part of their stay so far is that they are such an oddity that they cannot go anywhere without people staring at them. John said that it isn't a subtle stare, but an actual stopping in the middle of the street, walking up very close to them, and even touching the children and their hair. Everyone is stunned that there are three children and they want to get a good look at them. Sometimes a whole group of people will gather around them to look and it has been quite unnerving to Laurel and Emma when they have been somewhere without John along as a buffer. Although Laurel tries to communicate that they don't understand or speak Chinese, most people don't seem to care and continue talking to her in Chinese.

Their school has been a big plus. Both Emma and James are enjoying it and Laurel is making plans to volunteer a couple times a week. Yesterday they interviewed several women who applied to work as their nanny. They just need someone to use as a babysitter for a couple hours when Laurel volunteers at the school and on Friday nights for their weekly date. None of the women who they interviewed spoke any English so it is going to be a challenge. The language barrier is huge, and Laurel has gained a lot of sympathy for anyone living in a similar situation. John has found his language skills to be opening up doors of both friendship and opportunity. Although there are other Americans working at the plant, he is the only one who speaks Chinese and it has been a decided advantage. I've appreciated Becky's efforts to share her expertise with them and help them through this time of transition and adjustment.

Last night on chat, Steve mentioned that he is being recruited by a company in Nashville, Tennessee. A friend of Bonnie's lives there and referred Steve to this company. It was such shocking news that I'm still reeling from it today. Although they are a ways from signing on, nevertheless it doesn't seem possible that someone else may be moving this year. I called Andrea this afternoon to see how she was feeling and mentioned it to her and she commented that she was raised in Tennessee and that it is one of her favorite places! Becky's mission area included a small part of Tennessee and so she was very encouraging, too. I was hoping that someone would have some horror stories to tell about

Nashville but no one came forward with any. Of course, it doesn't hurt any that Bonnie is such a country western fan either.

Conference was the usual spiritual feast! I continually stand in awe of all the Church is doing throughout the world as well as the timely and crucial information that the General Authorities give out for our understanding and edification. What a great blessing to live in a day and age when technology makes it possible for us to hear and see it despite the distances that separate us. I was thinking about that yesterday when John and Laurel called and we spoke as if they were right here in my living room. When they get their computer, we will be able to communicate instantaneously through email. What a difference it would have made to my mother while she was in Pakistan if she could have had that kind of contact with family!

One thing John mentioned was that people invariably ask him how he learned to speak Chinese. This, of course, leads to the information that he served as a missionary for the LDS Church. Many, many people have requested that he teach them about his church and about Christianity. China is getting ready for the gospel. I told Daddy that the next invention we need is some little gismo that anyone can wear around their neck that translates what that person is saying into another language. Then people like Daddy and I could serve a mission in China. What a thrill.

P.S. One bit of extended family news. Lane's art work is being displayed at an "emerging artist" show in California in the coming weeks. He is visiting this Thursday and Friday in Rexburg and Uncle Don is going to help him design some frames for his art. Don does wonderful woodworking projects and volunteered to help him. We are proud of him and wish we lived closer so that we could attend the art show.

[Dad] Conference weekend was the usual rush for us with not leaving until Saturday morning to go down, because of SaraKay working in the harvest until late Friday, and all the connections to meet up with Mike and Marci and Tim and trying to be to all the sessions we could and then watching the BYU football game. But it was a very enjoyable time and we were so glad to be able to spend some time with everyone.

The spirit during the first session Saturday morning was so strong for me that I could hardly control my emotions. I felt the love of the Savior so strongly and I was moved with the music of the choir. It was a distinct honor to be able to be there and be a part of the proceedings of this historic conference. There was no question in my mind as to the origins of the calls for the new apostles--we were thrilled and received confirmation of the divinity of their calls as they spoke Sunday morning with such power.

Last week was a big membership week as we wrapped up the month and as a council we came out on top of last year for the same time period. We have a great spirit and attitude in our staff right now and I was shocked to have one of my men, Bennett, hand in his resignation. Next Tuesday is his last day and we don't really have anyone in the pipeline to take his place. I know that I will be busy serving four districts until we can find someone.

October 12, 2004

[Mom] It's Monday morning and we just received a phone call that there is no school for the high school kids. I guess a water main broke. SaraKay has been on the phone notifying her friends. She was almost completely ready when the phone call came so it was disappointing news for her, but her friend, Kwani, asked if she could help with a kindergarten field trip to Jackson's Trout Farm this morning.

Our fall harvest party turned out to be more of a harvest marathon than a party. On Friday afternoon Daddy took off work and we mowed the lawn, watered things, and picked apples. When SaraKay arrived home from school, we had her help us wash the apples in a Clorox solution, rinse them and then put them in grocery bags on the patio. The whole process took several hours, but by supper time we had everything ready for Saturday morning's project.

Several weeks ago I invited Melanie to do some cider with us when she mentioned that she had some yellow delicious on a tree that she didn't know what she was going to do with. As our date for the party drew near, Melanie did some investigative work and found out that the more varieties of apples, the better the cider. We ended up with four different varieties. The thing that neither of us anticipated was the volume of apples we would end up with. When Melanie arrived Saturday morning, she had almost as many as we did. Fortunately, Reed and Steve Scott arrived and we put them to work.

Daddy had set things up and we started about nine. Shauntel arrived shortly thereafter and Brianna came from Idaho Falls to help along with Melanie and Esther Scott. Steve and Bonnie got here about 11 and they and the older kids helped on the assembly line. The women checked apples for blemishes, helped load the hopper and once we got going, filled the plastic zip lock bags with the cider and carefully lined them up in boxes. It was exhausting work for the men who were lifting the shredded apples and turning the crank and the press wheel.

With that big of a crew, we really put out the juice and by 12:30 we had pressed 75 three-quart bags full of delicious cider. We had a great time together. After stopping for a brief lunch, we started on Shauntel's apples with our reduced crew. Shauntel had asked me earlier how many apples to bring and I told her to just bring what she had. She estimated it might be about 3 grocery bags. When we went out after lunch to look in her trunk, imagine our surprise to see it nearly full. She had picked several bushels and then loaded them in her trunk. We once again started the process and four hours later we had 23 bags of cider. Needless to say, Daddy, who had been on duty all day, was exhausted. We were so grateful for Steve and Bonnie and their family's help. Although we missed Randy who was on call Saturday, Shauntel was a real trooper seeing the project through to the bitter end.

On Sunday none of us could even look at the cider in the fridge, let alone drink any, but by this morning, the memory of the day was fading and we enjoyed the juice with our breakfast. Many thanks to those of you who helped and especially to Becky and Chet for letting us use their press.

Yesterday was the first day in our new ward. There was so much excitement in the air! Everyone arrived in good spirits and anxious to get acquainted. I got to substitute in Gospel Doctrine and that was a treat for me. Earlier in the week I was called to be the Homemaking Counselor in the Relief Society. We gained 30 new families. We have many who are strong members, but this morning when I walked with Janet Jenks who is serving as a ward missionary, she said that she and Bishop Jenks have their work cut out for them in this new ward. There are many, many who will need fellowshipping and introduction to the church. I'm very encouraged about how warm and welcome we felt at church and I'm hopeful that Moreland Sixth Ward will continue its tradition of friendshipping.

I called David last night and visited for a few minutes. Andrea has been feeling much better and is pretty much over the morning sickness stage of her pregnancy. She flew to North Carolina last weekend to be with her sister for a few days and Dave is playing Mr. Mom. He says he has several detailed schedules he is following to get him through the time that she is gone, but it is getting easier now that the kids are getting older. I thought about that on Saturday when Steve and Bonnie arrived and the kids were all looking so grown up. Nothing shows the passage of time like children. They refuse to stay little even though sometimes we would like to keep them that way for a while. Every time Paul and Jenny send another picture of Ben, I feel like I would like to stop the clock until they come home at Christmas and keep him an infant just until Daddy and I have our turn at cuddling him.

I miss hearing from John and Laurel. I know that they must still be waiting to get their computer. Just to have them on chat would make such a difference to all of us. They have called once and reassured us that they were doing fine, but I know they have been sick with bronchitis and unable to do much. Our prayers continue with them during this difficult transition.

Tim called on Sunday and we had a good visit. His interview in SLC went well, but he was one of about 25 students interviewing for two internships and he knows it's a long shot. He was impressed with the situation and the men he met.

Just prior to his appointment, while driving from Provo to SL, he heard a noise and knew there was something wrong with his car. He decided to continue to his appointment and then deal with the problem. When he finished up in SLC he drove back to Provo and called a mechanic to see if he could get his car in. They couldn't see him until the next morning and so he took the car in the next day. After checking things over, it was discovered that the lug nuts on one of his tires had worked loose and the mechanic commented that he was very fortunate that he hadn't lost a tire. Wow! What a scary thing to be driving that area going 70 mph and losing a tire! I told Tim that he had been spared!

I wanted to tell you a cute story that Becky related to me. She said that one evening last week they couldn't seem to get Larsen to settle down and go to sleep. He was in his room just playing in his bed. Finally, when Becky and Chet were ready to go to bed, they turned off the light and

immediately a little voice from the bedroom said, "It's too dark!" Exasperated, Chet went into the bedroom, plugged in a night light, and said to Larsen in a very stern voice, "Okay, now it's bedtime and you need to go to sleep." Just as quickly came the reply from Larsen, who by now was peering over his blanket with his big round eyes, "Oday, Daddy."

Chet kept a straight face until he got out of the bedroom and then shared the experience with Becky. As Becky related the story to me, I thought about the experiences of having a family. It truly is "the best of times and the worst of times." In the temple we are taught "that you may have joy and rejoicing in your posterity." I think this is teaching us that of all the things this life has to offer, our deepest joys will come in our family relationships. Of course, the flip side is that our most exquisite agonies come from that same source. May we each be blessed to find answers to the problems that vex us and may we turn to the Lord and trust in His care.

In closing I want to express some of the feelings I have been having since receiving the call to work in the RS. When I realized that I was being called to be the counselor over Enrichment, I found myself kind of dreading all the work that I knew lay ahead. For a couple of days I wrestled with my feelings. Today I was made aware of some of the personal problems that members of our ward are dealing with. Of course, these situations are very confidential and I haven't been in a position to know of these things previously. As I have gone about my housework today, mulling this information over, I realized that my challenges are small and that my present situation is such that I can give the time and energy this new calling requires. One of the hymns that has inspired me in times past has the phrase, "Come, come ye saints. No toil nor labor fear." The first time those lyrics struck me was just before the twins were born and I was worrying about how I could manage the workload. I took courage from them and continue to do so today.

[Dad] During Saturday's initial efforts, we couldn't get the apples to feed through the chopper very well and I pushed too far and caught a finger and cut it pretty good. After that, we figured out that we couldn't load the hopper and expect the apples to feed through, feeding them through by hand as fast as they fed through the chopper worked much better. It was a great experience to share with neighbors and family and wasn't nearly as bad as Sue portrayed it. In fact I drank cider that night, and off and on all day Sunday. A couple days of ibuprofen and we are back to normal. (Whatever normal is!)

Sunday was a wonderful "upper" for the whole stake and I think most people can see that the changes are for the best for the stake as a whole. I was able to participate in changing an Elder's quorum presidency and set them apart and also setting apart some other clerks, an executive secretary, etc. It was a full and rewarding day.

October 19, 2004

[Mom] Tuesday morning Deniece and I are making a quick trip to Utah to visit Grandma Ilene and to give me a chance to visit with Marci and her mother regarding the upcoming wedding. It will be fun to share the ride with Deniece and spend some time with Mom before heading home Wednesday morning. I have been doing some preliminary scheduling regarding Mike and Marci's wedding, but I'm to the point of needing answers to all the questions I'm having. For now, let me reaffirm that the wedding open house here will be on Tuesday evening, December 28th at the Riverside Building and the wedding will be at 9 a.m. at the Bountiful Temple on December 30th. I know that the Asian branch of the family won't be able to attend, but hopefully those dates will work for the rest of you.

We've had a busy week. SaraKay continues to limp through the last weeks of her cross-country experience. On Friday afternoon the team ran a course in Shelley. SaraKay participated but is still coming in at the back of the pack, her hips and calves still hurting. She is pretty frustrated with it but wants to finish out the season. This week will be their last meet. She'll miss it but it has been quite a drain on her time and energy.

Daddy and I left after the cross-country meet for Star Valley and our annual stake presidency retreat. As usual, it was a sweet experience. The drive was beautiful and although most of the colorful fall foliage is gone, the area is still so beautiful and awe-inspiring. Probably the most amazing sight was to see the river above Palisades about down to a trickle and the reservoir so depleted that there is nothing but bare ground for miles where the water used to be. It has been so dry for so many years that various kinds of undergrowth have taken over and there were people on four-wheelers and motorcycles racing up and down the area where previously there had been water. It's sobering.

My week was a mixture of getting the Enrichment Committee organized and being oriented to my duties. We have already had a new baby born in the ward and we made a home visit there. It was a young family, the mother Hispanic and the father, Peruvian. Both are members of the church but have fallen into inactivity over the years. Now the children are getting baptism age and so we arranged for the missionaries to teach the eight-year-old and hopefully help the family start getting active again. This new ward is just full of such situations and I'm hoping to use my Enrichment committee for fellowshipping and activation.

I just visited with Tim on the phone. He didn't get the internship he was hoping for but found out that he was the alternate. They only selected one and that really narrowed the field. I know he is disappointed but things seem to have a way of working out. He took Alisha to Homecoming but is feeling like she is just too young and not presently thinking marriage and he is going to back away a little and see if she actively pursues it. Timing is sure a key element in courting.

Daddy left about 2:30 today to spend the afternoon with Grandpa. He has been doing that since Alva Lu's meeting schedule doesn't permit her to come Sunday afternoon. Usually, Daddy attends Grandpa's sacrament meeting with him and then visits until Rick comes to take Grandpa to dinner. Today when he arrived Grandpa was very sick with the stomach flu. He had been sick with vomiting and diarrhea and so weak that he could hardly roll over. I guess that there are several in that wing of the center that are sick with it. Remember Grandpa in your prayers.

I am grateful that Grandma Ilene was able to get her vaccination on Friday at a local grocery store. Kathy took Mom and her neighbor at 8:30 a.m. and they stood in line for an hour and a half. I'm really concerned about the shortages.

At our retreat Martin Hermansen inquired about Paul. I thought it strange that he would remember Paul since it has been so many years since we were in Moreland Fifth Ward. I asked why he remembered Paul in particular and he said that years ago when Paul was just a toddler that he and Peggy came to our home for a fireside. He said that Paul was running around eating an enormous pear and part way through the evening he offered a bite to Martin. Martin accepted the offer and took a bite and shortly thereafter Paul climbed up on his lap, snuggled up, and fell fast asleep for the duration of the fireside. Martin said that it was so heart-warming that he never forgot it.

Someday, in the eternities ahead, I hope that I can see a rerun of the sweet moments of my life. I realize that most of what went on in the early years may not be pleasant to review, but I always feel badly when I hear stories like that and I have no recollection of it. I think I was either doing dishes or changing a diaper. I guess that is the purpose of each of us writing up our own history. Then our mothers can read it and (hopefully) smile!

[Dad] For FHE last night we reviewed a couple of conference talks from the Church News. We had some good discussions and feelings reaffirmed from another great General Conference. SaraKay wants to have a movie or play games every FHE but she grudgingly cooperates when we have a lesson and is doing really well at sight reading the hymns we sing.

Sunday was another reorganizing day as we installed Ryan Tew and Jeff Clark as new Elder's Quorum presidents. I was sorry to see Dad so sick but after visiting with him for a while he requested that I go to church for him, which I did and then reported back. There is always such a sweet simplicity to those meetings and I welcome the opportunity of sharing them with Dad.

Sue touched on the retreat in Star Valley. It is always a welcome island of tranquility in the midst of the maelstrom of life. We came up with the theme for next conference and next year of: "We become Millennial people as we show love for the Savior, listen to and obey His prophets, and care for one another." I am looking for examples of caring for one another as I prepare my talk for Stake Conference.

October 26, 2004

[Mom] As some of you are already aware, Bishop Godfrey passed away. Daddy and I visited him about a week ago and were amazed at how fast he was going downhill. Hospice was helping and Brenda confided in us that the nurse said he wouldn't last much longer. On Friday morning I made a visit and he was lying in a hospital bed in the living room. He was heavily sedated and didn't rouse at all. Friday night Bishop called and asked me to organize food for Saturday and Sunday. The family was gathering and Brenda was exhausted from the weeks of caring and worrying. Saturday about noon Daddy and I paid another visit and the whole family was there, quietly visiting and

waiting. Bishop looked like a skeleton with leathery, dark skin stretched over his bones. The night before his sons had given him a blessing and released him. He died about 5:30. We are in the throes of making preparations for the family dinner following the funeral on Wednesday. There is a definite feeling of relief mingled with the sorrow, but also a peacefulness that comes with faith in a future glorious resurrection.

I just got back from visiting with the caterer and making the decisions on things for our open house. When I visited with Mike on Saturday, he expressed regret that he wasn't around to help more and I had to admit that it's probably easier for me doing it on my own.

My trip to Salt Lake with Deniece was really fun. We talked nonstop for the three hours to Bountiful and Deniece gave me lots of good wedding ideas. We also talked about our families and what each of the kids is doing. Don and Curtis are both graduating with their Masters degrees in December and are in the process of job hunting. Their family has to vacate their home by January 1st and so they are up against a deadline in more ways than one. I keep hoping that they might find a job in the Utah/Idaho area but I know the job market around here isn't very brisk. It has been a special treat to have Deniece and her family close these last few years and we are going to miss them. SaraKay thinks Bradley is the perfect cousin and she and Carolee have really have a great time.

My visit with Marci and her Mom was very pleasant. They were so gracious and sweet and were accommodating in every way. Daddy and I feel like we have some of the most wonderful in-law parents. We have enjoyed our associations with them over the years and feel like all of them are kind and good to us. Karen (Marci's mom) was very organized and had all the answers to my questions. Following the planning session, Marci drove me to Grandma Ilene's and we visited for a while with Grandma and Deniece. Marci is such a sweetheart and we feel so fortunate to have her join our bunch!

On Thursday I attended the district cross country meet in Soda Springs. Both the girl's and boy's teams took second in the District. SaraKay came in towards the last but she stuck with it and we were proud of her. She is giving her hip a rest but hopes to start running again and keep in shape for track in the spring. She has decided not to try out for basketball. The decision wasn't an easy one. She really felt like if she made the team that she wouldn't see much playing time and the season overlapped the school musical rehearsals by about two months. It just wasn't compatible and so she decided to let the basketball go. She has worried that her siblings, especially Tim and Becky, would be disappointed in her but I assured her that they recognize that it's her decision.

My Relief Society job has been very intense. In the last couple of weeks we have had a new baby born, a sister with major surgery, and Bishop Godfrey's death. All of this without really being staffed and organized to handle it. We are meeting tomorrow for our yearly Relief Society leadership and then trying to get the visiting teaching organized. Tomorrow will be spent on the funeral. Our Enrichment Meeting is next week and we are scrambling to get things ready for it. The good news is that in all our visiting, we have discovered a beautiful Peruvian family with five children who have not been active in years past but who I think will respond with a little encouragement. I've made several visits there and our ward missionaries, the Jenks, are also keeping in contact. Hopefully we will see them come into activity. That is the one thing about church work. Although it keeps us on the run, there is no doubt that the individuals we work with are precious to the Lord!

On Friday we received a call from Tim informing us that he was selected for an internship in Provo with an accounting firm. He attended an open house there a week ago and the principals of the firm all showed him a lot of attention and hinted at an offer. It came through and Tim is overjoyed. He starts on January 18th and will be required to work 50-60 hours a week. The pay is good and he will have what he needs to finish up his Masters by December 2005. He was really pleased and grateful for the offer. He said the people in the office seemed genuine and he thinks this internship may lead to further opportunities. Congratulations, Tim.

SaraKay and I went to D.I. yesterday hunting a costume for a stake YM and YW 50's dance. We got so involved looking at all the other stuff that we had to physically drag each other out the door. SaraKay made the comment that she could spend hours there. Thank goodness we were on a tight schedule and forced to keep our visit short.

Becky and Chet have been made aware of another child who may be placed for adoption. They are going through the motions of getting

prepared even though it may not come through. They need our prayers. Also, Steve and Bonnie are facing some life altering decisions and need our prayers on their behalf.

[Dad] While Sue was gone last week, SaraKay and I got along pretty well and kept the house clean and all the dishes done up. I went to Centennial District Roundtable and did a computer rechartering training and handed out their charters on Wednesday night. Thursday I met with a fellow that is interested in starting a Scout Troop in a mental health place here in town that has developmentally handicapped clients. It would be a part of their weekly regimen and would give some focus and recognition to them as they achieve various activities and skills. It sounds like a great idea. A friend of mine in Pocatello was Scoutmaster for many years for such a troop in Chubbuck, sponsored by the stake there and pulling in "kids" from the whole region.

A large portion of Saturday was taken up with draining the hot water heater and replacing the bottom element and cleaning it out. You would be amazed at the amount of gunk I pulled out. It should make quite a bit of difference to be able to have a whole water heater full of hot water instead of 1/3.

Sunday was a busy day with the usual round of meetings in the morning and our ward meetings–installing the other councilor, Gary Wagoner, in the Elder's Quorum and setting him apart. At 2:15 I left to go in to the ECF to get Dad ready for church and attend with him. That is always a unique experience. During the sacrament a little old lady just wouldn't be quiet. One of the things she said was, "Three cheers for the red, white and blue. Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!" She was grumbling that we didn't have a flag and that the sacrament song wasn't a patriotic song. Elmer and Betty Rae Lamprecht were the speakers and did a great job.

At 4:00 we had choir practice to get a special number ready for Bishop Godfrey's funeral. The family had requested, "I Need Thee Every Hour." I really enjoy Dan Hawkes as our choir director. At 5:00 I went home teaching with Dale Taylor to Bishop Goodwin's family and to Clark & Jan Wray, even though they are no longer in our ward. At 6:00 we had temple recommend signing and then at 7:00 I had to be to a regional meeting about the Dance Festival for next year.

November 2, 2004

[Mom] It's beautiful outside this morning. The grass is covered with frost but the sky is blue and cloudless. Saturday SaraKay and I spent part of the day outside harvesting the last of the garden, raking leaves, and cleaning up. Yes, that beautiful windbreak that provides us with so much wonderful shade all summer, comes with a price. We spent several hours raking and hauling the leaves to the garden where they will provide mulch and nutrition for next year's crops. We used to do that with the grass clippings but then I heard from someone that grass clippings usually contain weed seeds and that is the last thing I want to encourage in my garden!

I know I have said it before, but this time of year I just have to say it again, "Isn't the earth amazing!" This year I purposely only planted two squash and two pumpkin plants, trying to "cut down" as we continue to say. When I went to Kesler's to buy my bedding plants, they wouldn't sell me just two so I bought four and gave the other two to my walking partner, Sharon Moss. Well, my two squash plants produced about 30 squash! Isn't that amazing! Where else could I get that kind of return on my efforts. I think that is why I enjoy fall so much. It is a time of abundance and a witness of the Lord's mercy and goodness!

We had a good group on chat last night. Lots of lively discussion and humor. I asked Laurel if James even realized that he was a minority because every time I see pictures of him he seems to be in the height of his glory, thoroughly enjoying his Chinese experience. She said that he does love his school and new friends but that the other day when they were going somewhere in a taxi, he saw a billboard that had an American on it and he said, "Look, Mom, there's another white guy!"

It is hard for me to imagine the experiences that the Asian bunch are having right now but we appreciate the letters and pictures enabling us to share in that adventure. We also appreciate hearing from Paul and Jenny and the rest of the family since even though we may not all live in exotic places, (like Asia and Idaho) our daily lives are filled with endearing moments and insights. The pictures are an added bonus!

As has been mentioned, Becky and Chet are in the process of adopting a Korean baby. Shauntel and Randy just completed their first step in also getting a Korean baby through an agency. She said that one of the questions on the form was

"Would your extended family accept a child of a different race?" Shauntel said that she wrote, "I think so. I was raised with an Indian sister and have a sister living in Korea and a brother in China at the present time." She is excited that maybe their child will be close in age to Becky's and it will give both children an additional sense of belonging.

I was thinking the other day of a story my father told me. When he had just started working for U&I Sugar in southern Utah, he worked with transient laborers who would come through the area in groups, live in housing provided by the company, work the fields, and then move on. Of course, these groups were of all different kinds and colors. Sometimes there would be disputes with management and sometimes disputes among themselves. It was usually a pretty tough bunch of people.

One day a Navajo Indian woman from the labor camp approached Daddy and handed him a small baby wrapped in an old blanket. She told him that he could have it because she couldn't take care of it. This unexpected offer took my dad by surprise and he refused. She again entreated him but he turned her down. Later, the crew manager was visiting with him and he related the incident. The worker said, "You should have taken the baby. It will probably not survive the winter ahead." My father was so shaken by this that he went back out into the labor camp searching for the woman but he couldn't find her. Over the years he had looked back on that incident with regret.

When Shauntel and Randy made the decision years ago to adopt, we were so pleased. We joined our prayers with theirs as they went through the process of applying and interviewing. I knew that with Shauntel's psychology training that she was very much aware of the problems children can have and that it was a leap of faith for them. One night as I was reading the scriptures, I came across a passage in 2 Timothy 3:2 which took on a whole new meaning. It said, "For men shall be lovers of their own selves." I knew that originally the apostle Paul was referring to those who in the last days were selfish and self-centered, but when I read it that night, it took on a new meaning. It meant that although we love our own flesh and blood, that in the Lord's eyes, all of his children are precious and that we shouldn't hesitate to extend our love and care to those not born into our blood line. It was personal revelation to me that brought comfort and instruction at a time that I needed it.

In closing let me just say that the Godfrey funeral was beautiful. Each child contributed in a presentation, "What I learned from my Dad." As the kids related their experiences with Lyle, it was obvious to me that it is the little everyday things that come to mean the most. The times together fixing fences, working in the garden, helping the neighbors, and living the gospel. His example of righteous living and dedication is one we all can emulate. Keep the faith.

[Dad] Just spent all day in a staff meeting in Idaho Falls. November is always an extremely busy month with much going on with Scouting for Food, University of Scouting, Holiday Auctions, rechartering, membership recruiting, and getting people in place and trained for Friends of Scouting. Most of yesterday was spent doing inventory in the Blackfoot store. For FHE we watched a great show, "The Day After Tomorrow." We wrapped up in a blanket and were enthralled with the show. It was refreshing to not have any language problems and no sexual innuendos.

Sunday was a wonderful day as usual. It would have been better if I had remembered the change in time before I went to bed. I ended up going to Riverside 2nd Ward and announcing that they would be having a change in their Bishopric next Sunday. Then I visited Riverside 1st Ward to support two departing missionaries that were speaking--David Ball and Michelle Moon. They did very well- especially Michelle. She gave a very Bruce R. McConkie kind of talk and will be a great missionary in Spain, Barcelona. She kidded David of going on a two-year vacation to Hawaii.

There was just enough time to grab some lunch before going to Moreland 1st Ward to install a new High Priest group leadership. Then I hurried in to the ECF and helped Dad shave and get cleaned up for church. Cleaning his razor and washing his glasses is also part of the weekly ritual. It is such a great service to have that weekly church service for the folks in the ECF. Dad always enjoys the service and the opportunity to partake of the sacrament. The people who volunteer to assist with the service are always so sweet to the patients there.

Saturday was an interesting one as all day was spent in the Idaho Falls office interviewing for Cedar Badge staff. There were a number of youth and adult leaders that conducted the interviews and we were staffing for Boy Scout, Varsity, and Venturer youth leadership training. During the course of the day, side meetings were held that

helped me to understand more fully what my duties are as advisor to Cedar Badge. Many of the volunteers involved are dear friends of mine and they expressed great satisfaction to have me as the professional advisor.

One of the interesting things that happened last week was a special meeting on Wednesday morning to meet the new head of Western Region of the Boy Scouts. He was very personable and it was part of a significant effort on his part to meet every professional in Western Region in his first 90 days in office.

It has been a while since I have shared a quote with my letter. I really like this quote from William Jennings Bryan: "Destiny is not a matter of chance, it is a matter of choice; it is not a thing to be waited for, it is a thing to be achieved." As bridesmaids we may think it is our destiny to go in to the wedding with the bridegroom. But if we do not fill our lamps drop by drop with the choices we make and the things we do with our time we will not have sufficient fuel in our lamps and we won't be ready.

November 11, 2004

[Mom] I just sat down to write and noticed that there was a letter from Jenny describing the events of their Sunday. I guess that the next best thing to being there is to get a detailed letter and pictures, helping us share in that special day. I'm grateful for life's milestones and the ceremonies that give us time to celebrate each one.

I would like to fill you in on Grandpa Larsen. Every four months the Care Center has an evaluation of how Grandpa is doing. Last Tuesday was that evaluation and the reports are all good. Although he has a difficult time swallowing, he is maintaining his weight and has not fallen for several weeks. Following the evaluation, we took him back to his room and Alva Lu told us that she would be going to southern Utah for a family wedding in November and that she was going to stay in St. George for part of the winter. I suspected that she was going to do that and I've worried again at how Grandpa was going to take the news.

I left shortly thereafter but when I visited Grandpa later that week, he had been visiting with the ombudsman and trying to figure out how to arrange to stay in the Idaho Falls condo while Alva Lu is gone. He feels that with a nurse he could stay in his own home and get out of the care center. He asked me to do some phoning for him and to have the ombudsman from the I.F. area line up nurses. He doesn't feel that he needs one 24/7 but I cannot imagine leaving him alone since he doesn't recognize his limitations. When I returned from my visit, I talked it through with Daddy and he is going in today to talk it through with him. It's painful to see his frustration with his situation. He has always been so capable and it is difficult to see him failing. Remember him in your prayers.

It is nice to have the election over. Using an old cliche, "it was too close for comfort." I stayed up until almost midnight watching the returns. It is always amazing to me how accurately the professionals can predict things. I spent part of the time listening to Jim Lehrer since I have come to value his opinions. One of the things I shared with Becky and Chet the next morning was that Jim's advisors both felt that Bush has got to get over the "my way or the highway" mentality and work with both parties to get some reforms in place.

It has been my experience that when the public makes enough noise about certain issues (prescription drugs), usually these issues come to the forefront, despite who is in a position of power. Hopefully that will be the case now. I called Becky and Chet the minute I got up on Wednesday to fill them in but they had been glued to CNN and knew more than I did. America is big news throughout the world, despite where you live.

Last Saturday after SaraKay and I got some cleaning done, I turned on BYU football and went out into the back yard to rake leaves. It was a gorgeous fall day and although there was a nip in the air, it was so pleasant with a jacket on. I listened to BYU soundly beat the Aztecs and enjoyed the opportunity to be outside. Even though I don't relish winter, there is enjoyment in the four seasons.

We had our first enrichment meeting last Thursday and had a good turnout. I have been very touched by the attitude that I have seen in those who have been transplanted into our ward boundaries. They are so devoted and willing to "go where you want me to go, dear Lord." It is indicative of the willingness of the saints to be obedient. I am getting acquainted with the ward members and enjoying my RS calling.

[Dad] For FHE Monday night we spent a little time spreading leaves in the garden and trying to get the tiller to wade through them. Then we studied the fourth chapter of Revelation utilizing a book

that I have had for some time. It is amazing how much information is contained in John's writings when you have some insights into the significance of every phrase.

Sunday was a full day with changing the Riverside 2nd ward bishopric--Paul Thompson, bishop; Gary Farmer and John Brady as counselors. We set them apart right after Sacrament meeting and then I went to Moreland 6th Priesthood Meeting and then to Moreland 1st ward Priesthood to put in a new High Priest Group leadership--Clark Wray, group leader with Rulon Cammack and Austin Moses as assistants and Gary Seamons as Secretary.

Then I went to church with Dad at the ECF and he and I both bore our testimonies. Choir practice was next and then several interviews--young men to be ordained elders and new high councilors to be sustained at conference.

Last Saturday was the University of Scouting/Cub Scout Pow Wow held at Snake River High School and Junior High for the whole council. We usually have about 450-500 scouters there with a broad selection of classes to help them in their Scouting callings. It usually makes for a full day beginning with setup at 7:00 a.m. and final cleanup at 3:30-4:00. We had an actor there that portrays Meriwether Lewis and many of the presenters dressed up. With the council's emphasis on Lewis & Clark we are getting quite a bit of attention and even a small write-up in the "Scouting" magazine.

General Norman Schwarzkopf said, "Airplanes don't fly, people make airplanes fly. Ships don't sail, people make ships sail. It is people, not weapons or machines, that count the most in battle. And when it comes to people, what matters most is character for when the bugle sounds, all the competence in the world won't matter if there are not people of character who will answer the call." Each of you exemplify that kind of character and I love you.

November 18, 2004

[Mom] This morning at six the phone rang. It was Becky and Chet telling us that the papers were signed and the little boy was now a part of their family. It was the culmination of many days of negotiations, phone calls, and prayers. Their friend who handles adoptions was helping them with it all, but eventually Chet and the father spent a lot of time on the phone, answering questions and talking through things.

A few days ago, the father asked to visit their family in Seoul and see the home situation for himself as well as review their financial situation. The meeting was set for November 15th and Becky and Shirley scurried around getting things ready for the "inspection." They had rearranged the kid's bedrooms to accommodate another bed and when Chet and the visitors arrived, everything was in readiness. Originally Becky had arranged for her friend to keep Larsen at her apartment during the visit, but before the day was over, Maddie and Tate arrived home and Becky retrieved Larsen. She felt that they needed to appear as they really were and let the biological father be aware of what the family situation was.

Becky said that the visit had been quite stiff and formal until the kids arrived from school and then there was a noticeable change in the father's attitude. He warmed up and watched with pleasure as his own son joined the others. Eventually the papers were signed and he became a Seely. Becky promised to get a letter off to us with all the information including his name, birthday, etc. I'm sure the weeks ahead will have their share of upsets, but our prayers continue with them and their family during this period of adjustment. (P.S. Grandma Richards said that as soon as she gets the information, his name will join her other 50+ great-grandchildren on her board.)

Our weekend was rewarding. Mike and Marci as well as another couple from Iowa spent Friday afternoon and evening with us following interviews in Pocatello. I had fixed some baked Idaho Russet potatoes for supper with a combination of toppings and served the birthday cake SaraKay gave me.

After a leisurely supper, Mike, Marci and I went over wedding plans, making sure that we hadn't forgotten something. Marci brought the invitations with her so that I can get started on the addresses. On Saturday they were scheduled to get a picture taken to include in the announcements. We went over guest lists and other details for a while and then played some games before going to bed. Saturday morning they left by 7:30 in order to meet their appointment in SLC. Mike is in a quandary as to just what course of action to take after graduation. Right now it's hard to focus on anything but the wedding, but come January the decision as to job vs. internship will be made.

Daddy was gone for most of Saturday and SaraKay and I spent a quiet day working inside. She had several reports and papers for her classes that she needed to complete and I had RS stuff to do. It seemed strange not to have the usual hustle and bustle of stake conference and meals for the guests this time. Because we only had one session and no general authority so we didn't need our usual Saturday evening and Sunday noon meals. It was nice to enjoy conference and not be worrying about what was happening in the kitchen. Daddy did a wonderful job with his talk on loving and caring for each other. I had a lot of people comment on how well he did. SaraKay and I were proud of him!

P.S. I had a sweet experience at the Care Center this afternoon that I wanted to share. As we have mentioned, Grandpa has been ill the last few days and when I went in to see him yesterday, he was in a hospital gown and didn't get out of bed even for meals. Today I went in and found him to be dressed and laying on his bed resting. After I had been there a while a nurse came in and told him that they wanted him to try to go to the dining room for his noon meal instead of taking it in his room. They got him into his wheelchair and since it wasn't time for lunch quite yet, I told the nurse that I would read to him for a while and then bring him down to the dining hall.

When I wheeled him down and pushed his wheelchair up to the table, all of the other three men at the table were already seated and ready for their meals to be delivered. They watched him without comment which I have seen them do countless other times when I've taken him for his noon meal and I thought what a somber bunch they all seemed to be.

I proceeded to open Grandpa's can of Glucerna, helped him with his apron and said my goodbyes. Just as I turned to go, one of the men at the table reached over and put his hand on Grandpa's arm and said, "Welcome back, Allan." It was so faint that I could hardly tell what he said, but in response, Allan put out his hand and shook the hand of the man who greeted him. Then, without saying a word, he shook the hand of the other two men and settled in for his meal. It was a small gesture of friendship extended that I think meant a lot to Grandpa. I left the rest home today thinking about how much small acts of kindness can warm the heart and encourage us to "keep truckin'."

December 1, 2004

[Mom] Tonight on chat we discussed our Thanksgiving weekend. It was unanimous that "a good time was had by all," although the trips home for Steph and Shauntel from Boise and St. George sounded like nightmares with all the cold and blowing snow making travel slow and dangerous. Steve said that it snowed for two straight days on the foothills in Cache Valley and they have nearly 10" of snow in Wellsville. We got some scattered flurries but it was the bitter cold north wind that has plagued us for the last two days. Tim left about three, with a planned stop in Bountiful to meet Alisha's family en route to Provo. Hopefully the roads weren't too hazardous and he arrived safe and sound.

We had a wonderful time in Boise with Dave and Andrea. We attended the community Thanksgiving Concert on BSU campus Tuesday night, thanks to Andrea's involvement with the orchestra. It was interesting to see the strong LDS influence in the songs that were presented. Nearly one third of them were arrangements by Mack Wilberg and they even performed "Heavenly Father, Are You Really There" from the Primary Songbook. Governor and Pat Kempthorne narrated by a prior taped video and the evening was inspirational as well as entertaining.

Wednesday we visited and made preparations for Thursday's dinner. It was fun to have Tim along. He arrived late Monday evening since he didn't have any classes on Tuesday. The trip to Boise gave us lots of good visiting time and we had a chance to talk through his classes, upcoming internship, and of course, Alisha, his romantic interest. He still has some concerns but most of them appear to be because she is still pretty young (19). He is in a quandary about just where the relationship is going and it is taking a lot of energy right now to sort it out.

Shauntel and Randy arrived Wednesday afternoon and Randy set up his equipment in the office so that he could read films while he was in Boise. It was interesting to see his set up and to have him relate some of the films to us that he was reading. Although he was on duty, there were times when he was able to break away from the computer and visit and play games with the family. It was a treat to have him share in the fun of the holiday.

We enjoyed Thanksgiving with Dave and Andrea and family. They invited some non-member friends that live in their neighborhood. The father of the family is a pilot for Delta and the mother is

a music teacher in the 4th, 5th, and 6th grades at a local school. They were very impressive people. The visiting allowed us to share our courtship stories and it was fascinating to learn that Greg was somewhat of a ski bum before meeting and marrying Karen. They seem to be fine people and certainly admire and enjoy Dave and Andrea. Hopefully the opportunity will come for them to hear the gospel.

We arrived home Thursday night about eight. Our weekend was spent shopping, cooking, and getting ready for our meeting tomorrow with Chet. He is flying in tomorrow for Melaleuca meetings and we will see him tomorrow night. We have some Christmas gifts for the kids that he is going to take back with him. If there is room, he may be able to fit a couple of things we got for John and Laurel's kids. He and Becky and family are meeting them in Thailand for a short stay prior to Christmas. We are excited to get to see Chet and only wish that the whole family could have made the trip. Our frequent emails and chat have made this overseas experience much more palatable than it would be if we were relying on snail mail and infrequent phone calls.

We have loved the letters that some of you have sent. We were pleased to hear from Jonie and pray that she will be able to get the diabetes under control. They have some wonderful medications available that have really been a boon to Daddy. We loved Paul and Jenny's letter and cute pictures. We love hearing from Laurel and Becky and empathize as best we can with the transitions they are going through. When John called Thursday afternoon, he put James on the phone for a couple minutes and it sounded just like he was Chinese. Wow! We love each of you and pray for your health and welfare. You are a treasure!

[Dad] Sue's account of Thanksgiving pretty well covers last week. One of the highlights for me was sitting in Dave & Andrea's music room and listening to Andrea play the flute to Shauntel's piano accompaniment as they practiced for the open house and reception. They are both accomplished artists and it was so inspiring for me to listen to them!

We had a deadline for getting home Thursday night. At 8:30 I had an appointment to ordain Dale Taylor a High Priest while all his family were here for the big day. I have thoroughly enjoyed getting to know him better as we have been home teaching companions over the last few years. Through the experiences we have shared he has become much more committed to the gospel and he and Sharon are serving as temple workers now.

Friday we were able to get a lot done around here. Thanks to Tim and SaraKay the lights are up outside, the Christmas tree is up and decorated and Christmas decorations are up all over the house. SaraKay has been playing Christmas music for over three weeks. It seems that we are really ready for the season now. The best sign of that was making up the first batch of pecan logs so that we could have some ready to send back with Chet.

Saturday we brought Dad home and have some time with him. He needed another haircut and Sue is always so gracious about doing that. It seems like his hair grows so fast--but he always looks so good when we get him all trimmed and cleaned up. He had a little trouble with coughing while he was eating and he told me on the way back to the ECF that eating is the hardest thing he has to do.

Sunday was a typical one with meetings, church, singing with the choir, choir practice, Dad and his church service and temple recommend interviews, and chat. Last night we met up with Chet in Idaho Falls and took him out to dinner at Johnny Corino's for his MBA graduation and birthday. We had a great visit and exchanged gifts. We are so proud of each of our kids and in-laws and all that you are accomplishing.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote: "The heights by great men reached and kept; Were not attained by sudden flight. But they, while their companions slept; Were toiling upward in the night."

December 7, 2004

[Mom] Tonight on chat, Laurel told about their weekend escapades when they drove five hours to see John's mission president. President Stratford is legal counsel for GM in Shanghai and also district president for the members of the church in mainland China. For the first time since they arrived in China, they attended worship services with other members of the church, including President Stratford, the Christensen's, and one single member. She promised to write and tell in detail the information President Stratford gave in regards to his meeting with the Twelve and the Seven Presidents of the Seventy. It was fascinating.

Life here is frenetic. Each day brings a long list of "to do's" for Christmas and the upcoming wedding.

I keep thinking that I'm about ready for Christmas and then something else pops up. I will say that having a December wedding has certainly given me motivation to get my Christmas shopping done early. This week we will get the invitations mailed. That will be a relief!

One of my favorite things about the holidays is the beautiful Christmas music. Our ward choir has come alive with the ward boundary changes. We not only got several excellent sopranos, but we also got Moreland First Ward's choir director, Dan Hawkes. We have a regular attendance of about 25-30 members and it has been so fun to prepare for the stake Christmas concert next Sunday and our ward sacrament meeting and ward party. I look forward to choir practice every Sunday!

On Saturday we got new windows. We have been concerned about our old ones since several of them had lost their seal and during the winter moisture would condense on the frames and sills and inside between the panes. We have felt like if we ever put our home on the market, that we would need to replace several of them anyway and so we took the plunge and decided to get it done. I was dubious about having windows installed in the middle of December, but the workmen arrived on Saturday morning and within about eight hours they had nearly completed the project. I can't believe the difference it makes! Everything is lighter and brighter and we are delighted with them. They finished up this morning (Monday) and aside from one pane that was broken in transit, they are through. They were efficient and tidy, even rehanging most of the curtains and blinds before they left. We are happy to get windows in the bay area that can be opened to allow some ventilation during the hot summer months. Hopefully we will see a difference in our heating bill, too.

[Dad] Well, I had better do my part and get this letter on its way. Last night for FHE we were stuffing and stamping and sorting wedding invitations and SaraKay exclaimed that this was the poorest excuse for a family home evening yet. She is a good sport with rolling with the punches of the various demands of a large family.

Mike called and told us about hearing from a man in Mexico that had been converted by a missionary that was a young convert of Mike's. The young man was thirteen when he was baptized by Mike and is now serving a mission with great success, having baptized sixty and wanted Mike to know the fruits of his efforts so long ago.

A while ago, Heidi Benson asked me to come as a Wise Man to her mutual Christmas party for the youth at her home tonight and give a special message. So I decided to go as the Other Wise Man and we found a bathrobe and turban at TeePee Toys in Pocatello and have accessorized it so that I can be appropriately attired as I give a modified version of the story of the Other Wise Man by Vandyck in the first person. I am excited about it and think it will be pretty impressive. I just hope I can remember my lines and deliver them effectively.

December 15, 2004

[Mom] This letter will be a short one. I'm sure your December has been as busy as ours. Last week we had our Relief Society Christmas party, the annual scout Christmas Party and our ward Christmas party was last night. We have really had wonderful participation in our ward celebrations and it seems like our ward is doing well. There is a feeling of enthusiasm and excitement whenever we have a chance to get together. Sunday evening we had our stake choir festival and our ward's choir filled all three rows of choir seats. Dan Hawkes is a great director and we picked up some wonderful voices when we got the Jacobsen subdivision. Anyway, we are enjoying the chance to mix and mingle at all of these events and hope that you are able to manage all the festivities of this season.

On Monday I started baking some things for the open house on the 28th. We are really at the "countdown" stage and I've started to hyperventilate. This Friday we are going to Salt Lake to spend the evening with Grandma Ilene and then on Saturday we are going to visit the Logan bunch, spending a couple hours at each home and then heading for home. Sunday is our Christmas program and the choir will be performing several numbers.

[Dad] Especially keep Sue in your prayers--she is experiencing enough stress that she is breaking out in cold sores and that is a sure sign of too much. I tried to talk her into just buying treats from Sam's club for the open house, but she was determined to have a nice, home baked goods (cookies, sweet breads, etc.) buffet. So last week she is running a marathon bakery here.

Last Tuesday night I did "The Other Wise Man" and it turned out really well. Heidi Benson said she

had a vision about what she wanted to accomplish that night. They had a nice dinner for the youth, Santa came and gave each of them a cookie, and then they wanted to end on a spiritual note. As I waited to enter, I could hear all the commotion as the kids were clearing up from the dinner and getting set up for their final guest. As I entered, a hush fell over the group and you could have heard a pin drop during my whole recitation. Several of the adults that were there commented on how they felt the spirit come in with me and were so happy with the results of the evening. They finished off with giving each of the kids a star tree decoration, and compared the transitory satisfaction of the world's cookie vs. finding the Christ and having Him in their lives.

A dear friend of mine--Kirk Kirkham--is a bishop of a student ward in Pocatello. I told him about the other wise man and he said they were having their ward Christmas party on Friday and that the kids wanted Santa to come, but he would rather do something different. I sent him "The Other Wise Man" and he used it instead of Santa and felt that it was a wonderful way to bring the proper spirit to their party.

2005

January 5, 2005

[Mom] Happy New Year! It's a beautiful, snowy-white day here in Idaho. The ground is covered with about a foot of snow and more is falling. We're having a leisurely day, just relaxing and watching some football and of course, eating our leftover Christmas treats. The house is quiet, the company gone, and I've been in a reflective mood, considering the events of the past few weeks and the Lord's tender mercies.

The wedding was beautiful. Marci was truly a beautiful bride and Mike, the handsome groom. It is so sweet to be in a sealing room, surrounded by family and friends, and to hear the promises given. It is awe-inspiring to contemplate the things of eternity and know that our lives here are but a small part of the journey we began long ago and one that will take us back to a loving Father if we prove faithful.

The month of December was one of the most stressful I can remember. I think it was a combination of many factors: commitments to the Fine Arts Club, the Relief Society, and the flurry of parties, programs, dinners, concerts, and recitals. Add the shopping and planning for Christmas and the wedding, and it became pretty harried by month's end.

We so enjoyed our time with each of you over the holidays. Not only did we have several days with Mike and Marci, Tim, and Paul and Jenny, but Staff came on Christmas day and stayed for the night before taking the shuttle to Salt Lake to catch his flight. Maren and Brock were also in town and joined us for dinner last Sunday.

Although things were hectic, we found time to get acquainted with little Ben and enjoyed our time with Beth. Jenny had given her a "chic" hairdo that made her look so grown up! Ben seems to be of a pleasant nature and rarely fussed despite all the commotion and being handed from person to person throughout the week. Tonight on chat, Jenny said that they had a trying time getting back to Wisconsin with several delays, but eventually arrived home last night about 10:30, actually crawling up their walk because of the ice. We're grateful that they arrived safely and appreciate all their efforts to be here for Christmas and the wedding.

Tuesday morning we went over to the Riverside building to get things ready for the reception that night. The caterer called the night before asking if she could push back the time so we met two hours later and that made the day a little more difficult. I thought the hall looked very nice, especially when Daddy brought in four immense poinsettias from Riverside greenhouse and placed them around the hall. By about one that afternoon we were through and the kids went to play basketball for a couple of hours before the other kids arrived from Logan.

That night we had a wonderful crowd, augmented by all of Mike's high school friends that were home visiting their parents for the holidays. It was fun to see so many of them and their young families. Marci's bishop from Rexburg made the trip to wish them well as did a cousin from Idaho Falls. It was an unexpected treat to have Lisa and Jason Hansen attend with Gary and Linda since they were home from Albuquerque for the break. My sister, Deneice, and Don came and I so appreciated her help in the kitchen. We were delighted with the evening and felt grateful for the love and support.

By the time we arrived home it was late but we watched them open gifts and ignored the mess in the kitchen from the night's activities. People were very generous. On Wednesday they returned the things they didn't need before leaving for Bountiful and festivities there with Belliston's.

I express appreciation to each member of the family who has helped us get through the last few weeks. Of special mention is Tim and SaraKay who worked right beside me for several days cooking and cleaning, wrapping presents, decorating, running errands, and being at my beck and call. I know that I wore them out but they were real troopers and never complained. Tim did enough dishes to qualify him for some kind of award! We were grateful that none of us had to travel in inclement weather. Thanks to Katie, Sam, Steph, Shauntel, and Andrea for their background music during the receptions, the grandkids for serving and carrying gifts, Steve and Bonnie for their duet at the dinner, and Linds for being the cameraman. And thanks to everyone for your prayers on my behalf.

The wedding and dinner in Bountiful were a delight and the reception that evening was so rewarding. It was especially nice for me to have Grandma Richards attend. Rick and Terry also made the trip and we appreciated that so much. The activities center where the reception was held was on a hillside overlooking the valley and the

sweeping view was beautiful. Marci had many of her coworkers attend and sing her praises and there were lots of tears shed as the children she works with came through with their families. It was very touching to see the love the children had for her and to hear them express their appreciation for the help she had given them as they received therapy in the "early intervention" program.

An added bonus was the number of dental students who were in the area for Christmas break, the kids from Provo from Mike's previous wards, and the mission companions who live in the Salt Lake area who attended. Jim and Karen attended and part way through the evening President and Sister Carmack arrived and we had a few minutes to visit with them and catch up on family news. They were interested in our Asian branch of the family since they have spent several years in Hong Kong for the church and have a special place in their hearts for those people. When the evening was over, we were bushed, but it was very sweet and rewarding.

Before I close, I want to comment on our 2004 Christmas miracle. Several months ago Becky mentioned that she and Chet and John and Laurel were planning a Christmas trip together. They were going to a place in Thailand called Club Med which is a resort in Phuket on the coast that caters to young families. They thought that vacationing together would help both families get through the holidays without too much homesickness. They debated whether to go the week between Christmas and New Year's or to go the week before Christmas and decided for the later. They both arrived at the resort and spent several wonderful days touring, shopping, riding elephants, attending productions, and lounging on the beautiful beach. As Friday approached, Becky and Chet moved ahead with their plans for departure, but because John and Laurel had been delayed a day with flight cancellations, Laurel suggested they stay an extra day or two.

After all was said and done, the decision was made to catch a flight out on Friday and both families departed and arrived safely home. What a shock when on Sunday morning they heard the news of the tsunami that leveled the area where they had been staying just two days before! What a blessing that they were not among the casualties. Laurel immediately emailed us to inform us of their safety and the phone started ringing as you kids called to talk over the events. Needless to say, as the death toll continues to rise, my mind has been plagued with all the "what ifs" and I feel such gratitude that they were spared. It has been a humbling experience for both families and certainly a sobering one.

Today I devoted my fast to giving thanks for their safety and for the many blessings of this past year. Truly we have been watched over, strengthened, and guided and we have much to be grateful for. May each of you hold fast to the gospel and make it an anchor in your life.

[Dad] We are so grateful for the generosity of each of you with the wedding and Christmas and all the help we received. We cherish the time we spent with each of you. One night Mike asked for a father's blessing, and then Paul wanted one, as we were doing that then Tim decided he needed one, and SaraKay joined in also. It was a special time together and I am grateful for the priesthood and the inspiration in blessing each of them according to their needs at this time.

Sitting in the sealing room with Mike and Marci and with JoEllen and Shawn the week before was another affirmation of the power of the priesthood. What a blessing to live in a time when the priesthood is here on the earth and we have the power to seal on earth and in heaven.

Work has been hectic as usual and as it stands right now, despite all our other successes, Blackfoot will miss being a Quality District by 20 kids. I really feel good about the new units we have chartered and their potential and strength and the other things we have achieved. I have also kept a few balls in the air with service to the three districts that have been without a professional. I am grateful for the wonderful people who volunteer and give so much time and effort to making Scouting count in the lives of the youth in our council.

January 12, 2005

[Mom] This past week I had to check my calendar to see if anything of significance happened. No weddings, no holidays, nothing very exciting, but just a nice, quiet, catch-up type of week! It felt good! I still feel like I haven't entirely recovered from the activities in December, but the weeks ahead look relatively manageable and that is encouraging.

As some of you are aware, it was predicted that our area would have "the storm of the century" starting last Friday and going through the weekend. The weather forecast was for high winds, record snow falls, and treacherous driving conditions. So certain of it the weather forecasters

were that several school districts in our area, in anticipation, cancelled all school for Friday. The grocery stores had record sales leaving many shelves empty and shoppers panicky. I joined the throngs, picking up milk, bread, and of course, ice cream. Who wants to be snowed in for several days without a supply of ice cream? And, like you kids who have lived through snow closures, SaraKay and her friends got on the phone planning the party "of the century," to my dismay.

I tried to discourage the venture, reminding them that if the wind started up or if the first flake fell, they would all be sent home. Far be it from me to be snowbound with a bunch of crazy girls. But, despite my threats, the sleighing party was planned and Friday morning dawned cold, sunny, and snowless. The party moved ahead, first at the gravel pits, then to Kwani's in Pingree and finally back to here for a showing of Napoleon Dynamite. As the last of the guests left, SaraKay and I both felt disappointed that the storm had evidently worn itself out somewhere else and our weekend wasn't going to be as exciting as we had hoped for. On Saturday we got intermittent snow flurries and a few inches, but nothing to write home about (or in the family letter.)

Imagine our dismay when Steph calls to notify us they received the "storm of the century" and had their morning meetings cancelled. Anyway, we are due to get another smaller storm in tomorrow and then frigid weather over the weekend. We are grateful that the snowpack is looking good and the drought may be over.

On a more serious note, Daddy and I spent some time in the temple on Thursday. We have felt such gratitude for the many blessings we have received these last few weeks. After the session I was standing in the front area waiting for Daddy when Sister Richardson, the temple matron, who was in Becky's ward in Ammon, approached me and commented that Dad had been visiting with her and her husband and told them of our connection to the tsunami. She expressed gratitude and quoted a scripture about angels having charge over us. It was sweet to see her concern.

[Dad] At work, I am pushing on units to get their charters in so I can get that wrapped up for another year. I have also been getting things in place for the Friends of Scouting drive which is due to start up within the next couple weeks.

Last night I visited with Becky, Cole and Larsen. It sounds like Cole is coming along pretty well with his English--I am not so sure of Larsen's English--he had a lot to say but I couldn't understand much of it.

This weekend we have ward conferences in the three wards meeting in the Moreland building: Moreland 1st, 4th, and 5th. I still am not sure what I will talk about, but I am sure it is going to be a wonderful and a full day with meetings starting at 6:30 a.m. and going until about 4:00. Sue is going to substitute for me in going to church with Dad.

My Cedar Badge assignment is picking up the pace. The first full staff meeting is this Saturday. We keep busy with a staff meeting each month, materials and supplies to order, and recruiting to fill the courses. Our District Klondike Derby is coming up the last of the month. For a spring camporee we are following the Council's Lewis & Clark theme and Aaron Moon has bought a buffalo which we will cut up and use for the meal--keeping things as authentic as we can with no paper or plastic. It should be exciting!

January 19, 2005

[Mom] Daddy is at a training for the next two days, has his District Scout Recognition Dinner this Saturday and then on Sunday he flies to Florida for a week-long training. (That sounds like a contradiction of terms: Florida/training). He insists that he will be sitting in meetings all week and that trips to the beach and other entertainment will be kept to a minimum.

Yesterday the spouses were invited to join their husbands in a day-long seminar which featured two presenters that talked about the book, "Leadership and Self-Deception." It was a fun experience to mix and mingle with the group and think about the relationships in my life and how I can improve them. We were guests for both lunch and dinner and it made for a full and enjoyable day.

Our lives have settled into a nice comfortable routine now that the holidays are over. SaraKay is involved three nights a week with play rehearsals and orchestra. I have had some of my time open up with her gone so much and I have gotten busy doing some family history work. This week I am helping with the dinner for the banquet on Saturday as well as helping Dad with all the framing of the award certificates. My Relief Society work has seemed manageable and my Enrichment committee is up and running so that has relieved a lot of stress, too.

Monday morning Daddy and I took Grandpa to the eye doctor. He has been complaining about his sight and we suspected a cataract but Dr. Marshall said that was not a problem. Allan has been preoccupied with worry about eye surgery and all of our assurances don't seem to put his mind to rest. He misses Alva Lu so much and tries to call her several times a day, but is unable to visit much and that is very frustrating. It is disheartening to see how discouraged he is and to know that there isn't much that can be done to cheer him up. We are planning to take him to Ashley's homecoming in February and to Jacob's wedding in March. He loves the chance to be with family.

January 25, 2005

[Mom] Daddy is leaving today for his weeklong training in Florida. He will fly from Idaho Falls to Boise to L.A. to Miami, rent a car, and drive to a place to catch a ferry to an island off the tip of Florida. He will leave I.F. at 4:30 p.m. and arrive in Miami at 6:30 a.m. Monday morning. Hopefully he will be able to sleep and not have too much "lag" for the busy week ahead.

This past week was his district awards banquet. In preparation there were certificates to prepare and frame, (nearly 50 of them), programs to print, the dinner to oversee, and all the set-up and clean-up for the event. Fortunately, there are wonderful volunteers. The Council held its yearly three-day training seminar Tuesday-Thursday and so much of Daddy's week was totally absorbed in those meetings.

Part of my job was to do the framing, compose write-ups on the six "District Awards of Merit," and cook the ham. Yesterday we picked up the ham and used three countertop cookers, one crock pot and our oven to accomplish the task. About 4:30 we transferred everything to the van and then set up at the church and helped with the dinner preparations. Last year they fed 325 people so the meal was planned with that in mind. What a disappointment when we only had a fraction of that number show up. I know it was disheartening for Daddy. Everything had been so carefully orchestrated and it was sad to not have the crowd. The biggest problem was that the Blackfoot High School's new gym was hosting its first ball game and we lost a lot of our crowd to that as well as to another scout function that was bumped to our night when it was snowed out two weeks ago. It was disappointing.

The training seminar was centered around the book "Leadership and Self-Deception," and as I mentioned last week, the wives were pulled in for the first day and then they discussed the concepts and how to implement them at work on Wednesday and Thursday. Last night at the banquet Daddy's boss, Kim Hansen, visited for a few minutes with me about the week and how much the seminar was already helping the coworkers to interact in a more sensitive way. I wanted to tell you the basic philosophy of the book.

When a person in his normal interaction's senses something kind or right that he should do for another person, whether it is a spouse, child, or coworker, and then he does not follow that impulse, he becomes defensive and finds fault with the other individual, hence the relationship is damaged. That person instead of being open and loving and treating the other individual as a person may start treating him as an obstacle, a vehicle (to be used to accomplish the other person's goals) or may be treated as if they don't even exist (since they aren't important anyway to the end goals of the offending individual).

The book suggests that we each evaluate our relationships and ask ourselves the question: Am I treating this person as a person of worth or as an object to get around, a vehicle to get me where I want to go, or do I not even really notice them? I know that is pretty sketchy but anyway, it was interesting and really got me evaluating my everyday relationships and habits.

This last week in the Church News it gave coverage to the Church's relief efforts in Sri Lanka and had beautiful pictures of the Presiding Bishopric walking among the people distributing things. The article mentioned that the Church's efforts will be focused in three areas over an extended period. He was also quoted as saying, "The response will probably be the most significant humanitarian effort the Church has ever been involved in. Our strategy is to assist with the immediate needs, buying locally for the most part, and then work out a plan for the long-term, months, maybe years, where we can help rebuild the structures of these devastated countries." He went on to mention clean water, medical supplies, workers in orphanages, and helping in other ways that become obvious with ongoing evaluation. What a blessing it is to have a Church that has the capacity to do this!

This afternoon at 5 p.m. I received a phone call from Daddy who was sitting in the Idaho Falls airport waiting another two hours for his flight out. His previous flight was cancelled and everything was pushed back two hours. Too bad. I went to the rest home to be with Grandpa for sacrament meeting and a very funny thing happened. The woman who was sitting on the row just in front of us was concentrating on getting the sacrament cup carefully up to her mouth and when she began to shake a little and some of it spilled, she very loudly said, "Lordy, lordy." Well, most of us who were visiting tried to keep a straight face, but it was hard! Never a dull moment in the care center.

February 2, 2005

[Mom] Yesterday the CD that Linds made of the wedding reception, wedding, and Bountiful festivities arrived in the mail. We had been excited to get it after learning on chat Sunday night that Linds had mailed them out the week before. Sure enough, it arrived in Monday's mail.

When scheduling our week on Sunday we decided that if the CD arrived, we would look at it as a part of our FHE. But, I must confess that Daddy and I couldn't wait until evening to see it and so we told each other that we would just look at a few pictures and save the rest for evening. Well, a half hour later we were saying, "Just ONE more and then we are going to wait until FHE to see the rest!" When we finally pulled ourselves away from the computer, we felt a little guilty that we had sneaked a peek. A few hours later SaraKay arrived home, spotted the CD on the computer desk and started into it while I thought she was doing her homework. To make a long story short, FHE wasn't the premier showing, but we did look through all of them again and thoroughly enjoyed it. Thank you, Linds, for a wonderful keepsake.

I just returned from running a few errands in town. I visited with Grandpa and talked through the quarterly evaluation that he had this morning. Daddy represented the family and called me later with the results. Grandpa is pretty much maintaining his weight and not much has changed. He is still hoping that eventually he will be strong enough to go home, but the personnel at the center feel that he does not recognize his limitations.

The other day I gave him a magnifying glass to help with his reading since he has lost a lot of his ability to read. Dr. Marshall has examined him and said that his sight is good but that due to the effects of the Parkinson's, he doesn't blink and so his eyes become irritated and the brain doesn't register what he sees correctly. Anyway, it is very frustrating for him. When I go in, I take something to read to him or something to visit with him about. Any e-mails or cards we receive we share with him.

Daddy arrived home from his Florida trip later than expected after an unbelievably long day. He awoke at 3 a.m. Florida time, got ready and drove to the airport to return the rental car, boarded and flew to Chicago, L.A., Boise, and then to Pocatello. He was scheduled to arrive in Idaho Falls at 7 p.m. but because of the dense fog, the plane landed in Pocatello and then the airline bussed everyone to Idaho Falls. He finally arrived home about 10 p.m.--one tired traveler! We were glad to have him home!

SaraKay and I had such a busy week with her piano recital, New Beginnings, feeding the sister missionaries, and my trip to Utah for Grandma Ilene's birthday that we didn't get everything done we planned on. We have spent several hours at D.I. hunting costumes for the "Titanic" play that she is involved in and for the most part we have the beginnings of the five outfits she needs. It would be an easier task if she was a main character in the play since then she would be either first class, second class, or third class and dress accordingly, but with her being one of the crowd, she changes from class to class, hence the need for several outfits. She is thoroughly enjoying the rehearsals and has a CD of Titanic music that she plays morning and night. The play is the first week in March and so we still have some time to get her costumes finished up. I'm grateful that we started early. Thanks to Shauntel for sending some costumes from her past performances and for the "period" paper dolls that show the styles of that day (1912).

My trip to Utah with Deniece was fun. We left Thursday morning and had lunch with Mom, did some shopping at D.I. and then had dinner with Kathy that evening. We so enjoyed the chance to be together! I wish Lisa could have joined us! After a late night we slept soundly and then headed home the next morning. Of course, part of the fun was visiting with Deneice non-stop both coming and going. What a treat to have a sister living close! I'll miss them when they leave Rexburg. Don is busy with odd jobs for now and sending out resumes to companies across the U.S. They know the right job will come along, but in the meantime, Carlene is finishing up her senior year at Madison

High School and Brent will be returning soon and start at BYU-I.

Sunday night was the Trek fireside and reunion. The CD produced by Kent Clegg was shown and some awards given followed by refreshments in the cultural hall. Each family gathered at a designated spot and each participant was given a Trek family picture and a CD. It was such a fun evening.

Our family reunion will be held in Island Park on July 28th, 29th, 30th. The Matthews, who we are renting the cabin from, said that we could go on Wednesday night, the 27th if we wanted since no one is scheduled to be in there for that day and the cleaning would all be completed. Becky and Chet have an appointment to have Cole sealed to them in the Idaho Falls Temple at 5:30 the evening of Tuesday, July 26th in the hope that some of you would be in the area and able to attend. Chet's family will be coming for it also. The reunion will be over Saturday by noon and you will have time to return home before Sunday. Our home is always available so if you want to stay over Sunday, we'd love it.

[Dad] Sue's account of my Saturday flying home was a fitting sequel to a similar Sunday afternoon and night of trying to get to Miami the week before, with a cancelled flight and juggling connections to fly all night and arrive in Miami at 9:00 Monday morning. I rented a car to drive to the Florida Sea Base which is on Islamorada Island, halfway to Key West. The weather was pretty chilly the first couple of days but then cleared up and was nice for the rest of the week.

My class was very small, just eight of us, and I was the only one from Western Region. The others came from Cincinnati, Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, and Kentucky. Our class was focused primarily on communications and team building. It was made up of a number of games and hypothetical situations and was enlightening and fun. I learned some things about myself that should result in some minor changes in behavior, but mostly it was quite affirming regarding my abilities and thought processes.

On Wednesday we concluded class at noon and had the afternoon and evening. Part of us went out on a 42' sailboat for a couple hours and then on a motorboat to some of the surrounding islands. It was really relaxing and fun. When we finished class on Friday I drove to Key West and walked on the beach, drove past Ernest Hemingway's home, and did a little shopping.

Sunday was a full day of meetings and no time to rest. When I took Dad to church at the ECF they were really disorganized and were just getting started at 3:15 when Dad started throwing up and I wheeled him back to his room and cleaned him up. Then he had to go to the bathroom and then started throwing up again. I got him settled in bed with a tub to spit up in and left him resting. Thank goodness, by Monday he was feeling better.

February 8, 2005

[Mom] I've been substituting at the charter school this week. I go in at noon, handle lunch duty and then teach four intercept students until 3:00. It has worked out pretty nicely for me and been enjoyable to see the students again. I am always amazed at the constant turnovers at the school and at how many of the students that I used to teach are no longer attending. The new building is under construction and hopefully they will be in for the 2005-2006 school year.

My big project of the week is our upcoming Valentine's dinner and entertainment for the Relief Society Enrichment night. We decided to invite husbands and partners for our February meeting instead of our birthday celebration. When I met with the February Enrichment Committee, I gave them an idea for the program and they asked if I would handle the program if they did everything else for the evening. I agreed, but it has been a lot of work and I'll be glad to have it completed.

SaraKay has been so busy with the play. She practices three or four nights a week for three hours each night and this week on Friday the choral groups are making a one-day trip to BYU-Provo for some choral instruction and program. They are leaving Friday morning at 6:00 and returning Saturday morning at 2:00 a.m. My biggest worry is about SaraKay staying healthy with the long hours. She has been trying to get over a cold and sore throat and she spent a lot of hours over the weekend sleeping. She assures me that she is feeling better all the time. Aside from the long hours, she is absolutely loving being in the play. She loves the music and we have had fun working on costumes.

Just a couple items of Larsen family news: Ashley got home from her mission to Brazil a couple days ago and will be reporting her mission on February 20th. We are going to get Grandpa there for that as well as for Jacob's wedding on March 5th in the Idaho Falls temple.

Grandpa asked me today if I thought he was going downhill and I told him that I thought he was just maintaining and holding steady. Then he asked, "How long am I going to have to hold?" I know that was the question that Grandpa Arch had when he was in the rest home. It would be easier to have a terminal illness and then you would know that it wouldn't be much longer until you would be called home. Remember him in your prayers.

[Dad] I just got home from visiting the Riverton Ward Blue & Gold Dinner. One of the award recipients from our District Recognition Dinner had to work at the last minute and was unable to come. So, I went to this ward function to award it to her there. The Riverton Ward is a small ward but with lots of Scouting spirit.

Yesterday was a full day of staff meetings. Steve Rankin, the Regional Human Relations Director was with us and spent 15 minutes getting to know each professional and discussing their plans and career goals. I don't know whether to try for a transfer and further challenge or just hunker down and work my way to retirement right here. I know what SaraKay thinks!

Sunday I visited the Emanuel Lutheran Church for their meeting. It was extremely interesting to watch a woman in robes and vestments conduct the meeting and preach and administer communion. One of the songs we sang was familiar but with some different wording than our hymn. Some of the other songs were really quite pleasant and modern sounding with good harmony and fun to sing. There are certainly some good, generous, sweet people that meet in that congregation.

February 17, 2005

[Mom] Last Saturday Daddy and I were invited to go through a session with one of my Laurels who was being sealed in the Idaho Falls Temple. Daddy had some scouting meetings so I went without him. I was sitting in the chapel waiting for the session to start when Gary and Linda and Ashley came in. She had just arrived home the day before and they were in the temple together. What a sweet surprise. Ashley has that "just arrived home" beam about her and we are looking forward to hearing her report this Sunday. If all goes well, Grandpa Larsen will be there too. Yesterday he fell out of his wheelchair while trying to pick something up off the floor and he has a big goose egg on his forehead. Hopefully it will quickly heal and he won't look too battered this weekend.

Our RS dinner on Saturday was a big hit. We had almost 100 people come and we really had a fun time. SaraKay and three of her friends sang "I Will Survive" and "When I Fall in Love" for part of the program and they did a great job. They performed these songs at their concert a week ago and so they had them memorized and ready. I had arranged for a guessing game involving wedding pictures of the couples in the ward, and that was fun to try to guess who was who. All in all, I think it was a great party and we involved several less actives as well as having some nonmembers come with the Jenks', our ward missionaries.

With all the long hours, SaraKay had a recurrence of her sore throat and cold and we're battling that again. She has one short solo in the play and she has to have her head voice to do it since it is very high, so she has got to get this under control.

Friday night the stake presidency met for dinner at the Shipley's. The Korths, who were in the stake presidency until they left on their mission to India, also joined the group and we had a thoroughly enjoyable night together. President Shipley received word that he will be released in April so this was kind of a goodbye dinner. It has been an experience that we cherish.

When I called Grandma Ilene today, she mentioned that Nate and Maureen delivered Ben to the MTC today. While they were there visiting with Grandma, Ben told her that he hoped she would be around to see him when he returned in two years. Nate commented, "Ben's theme song right now is, 'I'll go where you want me to go, Dear Lord.' Grandma's theme song is 'I'll go when you want me to go, Dear Lord!'" I guess that is true for all of us, isn't it!

I'm glad that Tim and Ben had some cousin time together these last few months before he left for the mission field. Some of the younger cousins haven't had the bonds that the older ones had. One time when Nate was in Provo visiting his kids a few months ago, he was in a grocery store and was standing in a check-out line and saw a young man up ahead of him and he said to himself, "Now there is a fine-looking young man." Upon closer examination he realized that he knew the young man. It was Tim. I thought that was a nice compliment.

February 23, 2005

[Mom] Our President's weekend was eventful. SaraKay and I spent time on Friday night and Saturday finishing off her costumes for the

upcoming play. Daddy had a training all morning on Saturday, but had the afternoon off. He visited with Grandpa while SaraKay and I did some final shopping at Wal-Mart to complete her costumes.

On Sunday we attended Ashley's mission report and so enjoyed the chance to be with family. Most of Gary and Linda's family were there as well as several on Linda's side and Rick and Terry, Jonathon and Amanda. Ashley gave a wonderful report and told some experiences that were heartwarming. Linda commented what a joy it was to have her home. Returned missionaries bring home with them a spirit that permeates the home and family for weeks after.

Alva Lu arrived home on Friday for a few days and attended Ashley's report. We hosted dinner for her and Grandpa afterwards. Shauntel, Camille, and Arch were also here. They had originally planned to come Saturday, but complications with Randy's work delayed them a day.

Daddy had three ward conferences that day so he left about 6 a.m. and we didn't see him again until after four. He later commented to me that the Riverside First Ward was an especially reverent and spiritual meeting. When I asked his appraisal of why, he commented that the ward members are still responding to the death of Damon and Delis Orr's little boy and that the feelings are very tender still.

On Monday we babysat Arch and Camille while Shauntel went shopping with Marilyn and Steve. Daddy and I left at one to pick up Grandpa and take him to see “The Work and the Glory,” showing in the Idaho Falls theater. I don't think Grandpa even knew where we were taking him for a while, but he seemed to be enthralled with the movie and so were we. I think it is the finest film that has been produced yet by the LDS private sector and would recommend it to anyone. SaraKay babysat until Shauntel returned at two and bundled up the kids for the return trip. It was so nice to have the Andersons here for a couple days.

[Dad] We just found out that the general authority attending our stake conference at the end of April is Charles Didier of the 1st Quorum of Seventy. We are looking forward to that great opportunity to have his direction and instruction at our Stake Conference. We are also going to have a Young Women's Chorus sing and a young woman recite the "Living Christ" from memory--that is so powerful!! I have been memorizing it and am so filled with appreciation for the Savior and the power of the testimony of the Twelve.

It was fun to take Dad to the movie on Monday. It was a beautiful day and it was invigorating to drive along and let him see the fields and snow that remained from our storm over the weekend. I know he relishes every opportunity to get out of the ECF. We thoroughly enjoyed "The Work and the Glory." The acting was great, the cinematography was great, and the treatment of the furor in the community because of Joseph Smith and his visions was handled so well.

We had wonderful ward conferences in Riverside on Sunday. The first one, Riverside 1st, started off with the choir singing, "In a Coming Day" about Bruce R. McConkie's final testimony, and the spirit came so strongly and stayed throughout the meetings of the day. Bishop Thalgot gave one of the best talks regarding repentance that I have heard. My talks were about commitment and I was able to draw upon some of the material in Stephani's talk that she gave a couple weeks ago.

Saturday we concluded our training early so we could assist with flag ceremonies at the Simplot Games in the Holt Arena. The Simplot Games have become the largest indoor high school track meet in the country. There were kids there from 23 states and Canada. Many Olympians had their start in Pocatello at the Simplot Games. Because of our collection of state flags, we assist with the athlete's march state by state around the arena and then with the posting of the colors.

March 1, 2005

[Mom] We got a new computer last week and learning how to use it has been frustrating. Daddy is seldom home and so I feel hamstrung trying to figure out all the processes that I had mastered on the old one. I’m thrilled to have a new computer since the old one was giving us fits, but it's this transition period that’s hard.

When Daddy went in to visit Grandpa on Saturday, he was alarmed at his condition. He had wheeled himself into the dining hall and was sitting, slumped over and incoherent. Daddy got a nurse and they tested his oxygen and it was low so they increased the amount on that. He took him back to his room and shaved him and cleaned him up but during the whole process, he was pretty sullen. He stayed about an hour and a half with him and he never did respond much.

Yesterday when he went in to take him to his Sunday meetings, he was a little better. He

questioned him after the meetings and asked him if he was giving up. Alva Lu left on Wednesday to return to St. George and before she left, he confronted her again about taking him home to Idaho Falls. She had to be very direct with him and we think he is starting to realize that he isn't going to ever return home. It always throws him for a loop when he has one of those sessions. It's hard to watch his disappointment. We'll keep everyone posted on his condition. We hope that he will be well enough to participate in Jacob's wedding this Saturday. He has been looking forward to being a part of that. (So have we).

My sister, Deniece, had surgery on Friday and we visited her on Saturday evening. She looked good and is on the mend. She had her gallbladder removed. During our visit Don gave us a pamphlet on a condition called Malignant Hyperthermia. It is a genetic condition that can cause distress with anesthesia and can even be fatal. Before Deniece went into surgery, Grandma called and informed her of the condition and said that she should warn the anesthetist that she could have Malignant Hyperthermia. Deniece said that she mentioned it to the hospital personnel and that they gave her specialized treatment to avoid an episode. The doctor also gave her enough pamphlets for her children since each of them probably carry the gene and it could be fatal So, since I probably have the gene, too, consider yourselves notified and if any of you go into surgery, let the anesthesiologist know that the gene for Malignant Hyperthermia is in the family.

Last night on chat it was mentioned that several in the family are traveling this week. Steph and family are going to California, Paul and Jenny are in New York, and David is going on a business trip to Mexico. It reminded me of the morning of 9/11. Either Steph or Becky called and told me to turn on the TV. Then they told me what had happened and the first thing I thought about was, "Who in the family is traveling today?" It is pretty humbling to realize that we are all so scattered and susceptible to world calamities and accidents.

David mentioned on chat that Andrea is feeling ready to have the baby. Her mother returns from El Salvador in a week and will be there with her to help. What a fun reunion! I know that Sister Cottam has had a wonderful mission. One of the members in our stake called and said that her mother is a companion to Sister Cottom and that her mother thinks Laurel walks on water. I thought I would pass that sweet comment on to Andrea. We are excited for Dave and Andrea and pray that all will go well for them with the delivery and recovery. After Chantelle was born, Andrea had surgery to remove her tailbone since each time she delivered a baby, it rebroke it and she had several months of misery until it healed. This time that will not be a factor.

Yesterday when the Rose Ward bishopric entered their newly remodeled building for meetings, they discovered that someone during the night had broken in and set fire to the building. The new carpets were destroyed, light fixtures melted and smoke damage everywhere! What a sad state of affairs. The fire marshal told the church members that this is not an isolated incident and that the church is taking increased safety measures because of vandalism throughout the area. It just made me heartsick.

[Dad] I have been busy with working on new sponsors for Scouting units, auditing Friends of Scouting dollars, following up with the two men I supervise, taking care of details with Cedar Badge, Blackfoot District Merit Badge Pow Wow, District meetings, and so on. Last Saturday I went to Pack 262's Blue & Gold celebration. That is my pack sponsored by the Rotary Club that has over 60 boys and lots of wonderful leaders. They held the event in a large new building that is a horse arena where they practice calf roping, barrel racing and so on. It was a lot of fun for the kids and their parents.

They also had a bridging ceremony to graduate nine Webelos boys into Scouts. The people were really generous and responsive with our plea for FOS and we got more pledged from them than from some wards in the district.

It has been hard to have Dad so ill the last few days. There is a possibility that he has an upper respiratory infection, and the way he acts I wouldn't be surprised if he has pneumonia again. Gary and I administered to him late yesterday afternoon. Gary went in to see him for a while this morning and Rick & Terry and their family were there last night for FHE. Rick commented on how much Dad responds to his kids and vice versa.

For our FHE we went to the dress rehearsal for "Titanic" and watched SaraKay and her friends--they do a wonderful job! I was amazed at the number of excellent voices and the power when all the kids sang together. Some of those kids looked so mature all dressed up like some of the millionaires that were on the real Titanic. This production follows the actual events more closely than the fictionalized movie version.

March 7, 2005

[Mom] These past few days have been amazingly hectic as we tie up loose ends from Grandpa Larsen's funeral. Several of you have called asking about the proceedings and I hope this account will help you share in our experiences of the last few days.

As we mentioned in our last family letter, Grandpa took a turn for the worse on Saturday, February 26th. Daddy went in to visit with him and found him stretched out in his wheelchair, unresponsive. He pulled him up into his chair, got him back to his room, cleaned him up and shaved him and he still didn't seem to be coming around. He notified one of the nurses and they immediately turned up his oxygen, put him on respiratory therapy and took readings of his vitals every couple of hours.

Sunday when Daddy went in to go to sacrament meeting with him, he had improved a little, but Daddy tried to reach Rick and let him know that Grandpa was too tired for his usual Sunday evening outing and dinner with his family. He didn't reach him before he was en route to Blackfoot so when Rick arrived and discovered how bad Grandpa was, he stayed at the care center and just visited him.

On Sunday Alva Lu called and asked how Dad was doing and I filled her in on the events of the previous day. She called again on Monday and I mentioned that I was going in that morning and would let her know if his condition had worsened. Later she called the care facility and they told her that he seemed to be strengthening.

Monday morning, I went in to visit and although Grandpa recognized me, I was alarmed at his condition and asked him if he wanted a priesthood blessing. He said that he did and I called Daddy. He called Gary and they agreed to meet that afternoon and give him a blessing. I then went to the head nurse's station and expressed my concern. I asked if I should notify the family and they said that he was holding his own and they didn't see any cause for alarm. That afternoon about 5:00 Daddy and Gary administered to Grandpa. Gary anointed and Daddy sealed the anointing. The primary things he remembers about the blessing were 1) blessing Dad that if it was the Lord's will, he would be able to strengthen and recover, and 2) that he wanted Dad to know how much his family and friends loved and respected him for all that he had done. After the blessing Grandpa said, "Beautiful blessing, Steve." That evening Rick and Terry and their kids made a visit for FHE and had some time with him again.

On Tuesday morning I went in and he seemed a little better. Grandpa was complaining that one of his hearing aids wasn't working, so I took it and told him I would have Daddy take it to Idaho Falls and have it repaired. After I had been there a while the nurse came in, took his vitals, and told him that they wanted him to try to eat in the dining room instead of taking his meals in bed. Since it wasn't quite time for lunch, I read to him from his personal history and then took him to lunch. When I left him that day, I had no idea that it would be the last time I would see him alive.

At about 6:25 on Wednesday morning the care facility called and informed us of his passing. They related that a nurse had checked on him at 6:00 a.m. before going off duty and when the new nurse came on duty, she checked on him at about 6:20 and he was dead. There were no signs of trauma and they suspect that he slipped away in his sleep. I hope that was the case.

After receiving the phone call, Daddy immediately began calling Alva Lu and his siblings and then he and Gary and Rick met at the ECF and had some time with Grandpa before the morticians picked up the body. When Daddy arrived at 7:30, Gary had already been there about 10 minutes. The CNAs on duty had cleaned Grandpa and his bed up and shaved him and he was laying there peacefully with his hands folded on his stomach. His hands were still relatively warm and supple. Rick arrived about 30 minutes later and the three sons had a sweet time together talking about their Dad and sharing memories and thoughts. After the mortuary personnel left, they gathered up all of Dad's possessions and cleaned out the room.

Alva Lu caught a flight from St. George and arrived in Blackfoot about 3:00 Wednesday afternoon. We met with Ryan Tew at the Hawker Hill Funeral Home to plan the funeral and take care of the details. Alva Lu, and her children Wynn, Jalene, and Bret and Sherry Belnap were already there when we arrived. Gary, Linda, Daddy, and I represented the Larsen's.

We met for about two hours, talked through the funeral program, the obituary, selected a casket, chose a funeral program pamphlet, and ordered death certificates.

Later that evening Alva Lu called and suggested that while the family was gathered for the funeral it would be a good time to distribute the

Allan/Barbara Larsen possessions that were in her condo in Idaho Falls. She said that she would gather everything up and put it in the garage and that it would be helpful if our side of the family would arrange to pick the things up. After conferring with Gary, it was decided that we would rent a U-Haul truck and load it in the time between Jacob's wedding and wedding dinner on Saturday.

With Rick and Terry totally absorbed preparing for the upcoming wedding, Linda and I moved ahead and evaluated the needs of the Larsen's during the days ahead. I suggested that we approach Grandpa's accountant, Layne VanOrden, and see if we could reserve some motel rooms for Sunday night since most of the family would be here for the evening viewing and would need lodging. We also suggested that we have a family dinner on Sunday evening since everyone coming would need to be fed before the viewing. Layne agreed and I ordered ham and salads from Keslers, rolls and cake. It simplified it considerably for all of us and made the day manageable.

Thursday morning as we watched SaraKay leave for school, Daddy commented that he had hoped to fit in a temple trip before the funeral. We looked at the time and decided that if we hurried, we could make the 9:00 a.m. session and be home by noon to continue with funeral details. It was sweet to be in the temple and made even more so by being asked to be the witness couple. It was a very small session and it seemed right to spend our morning in that way.

Earlier in the week Daddy and I attended SaraKay's play at the high school and then when Grandpa died, Shauntel and Tim both decided that since they would be coming on Sunday and Monday for the funeral that they would come earlier in the week and go to the play. Steve and Bonnie had already planned on coming and combined their trip to see SaraKay's play with visiting Bonnie's parents in Idaho Falls. It made for a special treat for SaraKay to know that several of her siblings would be there for a performance. On Thursday a large box arrived for SaraKay. Inside were a dozen roses, packed in ice. John had ordered them over the internet. It was very thoughtful. Later I told SaraKay that she was a very lucky girl. Even though her siblings are scattered everywhere, they took time to call, write an email, help with costumes, attend the performance, and encourage her in other ways.

On Saturday we enjoyed our time in the temple with Jacob and Tanessa. They were certainly beaming and obviously thrilled with being in the temple to be married. Earlier that morning Bonnie took the children to her folk's home and Steve was with us in the temple and at the dinner. There was a lot of show of support from both the Larsen and the bride's family and the entire event was a pleasure to be a part of.

It turned out to be wonderful weather for a wedding and we participated in some picture taking before Mark and his bunch, Gary and Linda, Steve, Dad and I went to Alva Lu's to load things. We were pushed for time, but got everything loaded and inventoried before the wedding dinner that was held at "The Loft," just outside of Rigby. It was a wonderful occasion and, as usual, Terry had seen to all those little details that add so much "class."

When we arrived home about 4:30 SaraKay was babysitting Arch. Shauntel and Camille soon arrived home from the Vivian Anderson 85th birthday celebration. I started working on SaraKay's hair (a special ringlet hairdo that took 45 minutes to do every night of the performances) and Shauntel and Daddy unloaded the U-Haul. Karen and Jim spent the night with us and everyone but SaraKay and I and Camille went to the reception in Pocatello.

At 6 p.m. I spoke at a baptismal program for a little girl in one of the families we have been fellowshipping. Then I took Camille and the two of us went to the last performance of "Titanic." Tim arrived from Provo while I was at the baptism and went to the high school and was saving us seats. Camille sat on his lap and thoroughly enjoyed the play, start to finish. By Saturday night, after three dress rehearsals and five performances, I think SaraKay was grateful to have it come to an end. It was a highlight of her school year and even though Grandpa's passing complicated the situation, I know she felt like she had had a wonderful time.

Sunday morning was hectic. Gary called and invited the Vanfleets to attend the Moreland Second Ward with his family since that is the ward that Karen grew up in. During our Sunday meetings many ward members extended condolences. Daddy, Tim, and I bore our testimonies and were able to share some of our experiences with the ward.

SaraKay was set apart as the Mia Maid president during YW and we were invited to join her for that, and following that Daddy and I decided to come on home instead of disrupting RS and high priest

quorum. When we arrived home, we saw an unfamiliar car in the driveway. At first we thought it was Shauntel's since she had gone in earlier to attend meetings with the Archibald's and we thought she was back. As we drove in the garage, we noticed it had a Nevada license plate and decided it was probably Staff's rental. Since no one was upstairs, I called down the stairwell, "Staff!" Someone responded with a low moan and Daddy headed downstairs to see who it was. What a surprise when he found someone sleeping in the sewing room. He was covered with a colorful afghan and had long reddish hair and tattooed ankles poking out the bottom of the afghan. I waited at the top of the stairs and when Daddy didn't come back up, I went down and found him in the sewing room in a big bear hug with Staff's son, Matt. Both were crying and I joined them in the hug. Matt explained that they had arrived just a short time before, made themselves at home, and were taking much needed naps. We encouraged him to go back to sleep and we quietly made our way back up the stairs so they could continue napping. By 2:30 Staff was awake and came upstairs to visit. He related their experiences with Cocoa's wedding the day before and all the festivities in Las Vegas with their extended families, including Jeanie and Scott, Jeremy, and Bethany. (Probably Barbara and Allan were there, too).

At about 3:00 Daddy left to attend his final fast and testimony meeting at the ECF. He wanted to bear his testimony and express appreciation to the church leaders and residents for all they did for Grandpa. Later he related what a sweet experience it had been.

By four the family started to arrive for dinner. Those present were Daddy and I, Shauntel, Camille, Archie, Tim, SaraKay, David, Andrea, Anna Sue, Gary and Linda, Mindy, Roger, and their five children, Emily, Staff and Matt, Jeanie and Scott, Julianne and Brad Hoopes and their two children, Maren and daughter, Christian and Lacy, Bethany, Mark, Rita, Jessica, Jet and Josh and their daughter, Jeff and his girlfriend, Nicole, Rick and Terry, Jacob and Tanessa, Amanda and Aubry, Karen, Jim, Teresa, Jacob and Josh. It was so nice to be together and all the food that we had catered turned out just great.

By 5:30 the group dispersed, some checking in to the Super 8 and others just finding a bedroom where they could change and get ready for the viewing. We were advised to be at the mortuary by 6:00 since many people would come early and want to visit with the family before the main group from 7:00 to 9:00. We were glad we did since by 6:30 the whole viewing area was packed full of people and stayed that way throughout the evening. It was a thrill to see the support for the family! One of the most poignant moments was when we visited with a Hispanic man and his wife who were there waiting when we arrived. He had worked for the J. Berkeley Larsen family in 1930 when he was 17 and was hoping that he might see some of Allan's siblings by attending the viewing. He wasn't disappointed since Bim, Reid, and Naida all shortly arrived and reminisced with him. We saw many political acquaintances, church leaders, neighbor’s past and present, ward members from Moreland and Idaho Falls, Alva Lu's family including several of her siblings, her children and grandchildren as well as those on the Larsen side.

Before the people arrived, we had a few minutes to view Grandpa's body. I thought he looked so nice. The morticians had carefully covered an ugly scab from a fall he had taken a couple weeks before. He was in new temple clothes and looked so peaceful. Many visitors commented on how frail and thin he looked but I knew that compared to what he had looked like the last few weeks of his life, he really did look very good.

Monday morning Daddy left about eight to pick up Staff at the motel and pick up food for the funeral dinner. Since the funeral was held in the Blackfoot West Stake Center and Alva Lu and Dad hadn't been a part of that ward for about five years, we offered to help with the dinner. The ward provided the potatoes and salads and we furnished the meat, bread, and desserts. The ward Relief Society was so gracious in setting up for us and serving the meal. We told them to prepare for 125 and nearly every chair was filled. I had ordered a delicious roast beef and gravy from the Shilling House and it turned out to be a lovely meal.

The funeral was very sweet. With an emphasis on music and minimizing the talks, the spirit was palpable. We hope to send each grandchild a copy of the program as well as a DVD of the funeral services. (Daddy's note: At the graveside, Matt came up to me and gave me a big hug and said how much he appreciated being so readily loved and accepted. He admitted that he had been afraid of coming back and the kind of response he would get from the family. We were able to discuss the fact that he had made some bad decisions but that he still knew the gospel was true and why he was feeling the things he was

feeling during the funeral and that repentance is a door that is always open to him. It was a sweet exchange and I was so grateful for all the family that had gone out of their way to let Matt know we love him.)

Following the services and dinner, the seven children and spouses gathered here for a family meeting. It was decided that any papers, pictures, etc. that were in the boxes in the garage would be given to Karen for safekeeping and that she would be the "Family History" person. It was also decided that Mark would be the family technology specialist and help with such things as getting family home movies made into DVDs and slides from Mom and Dad's lives also made into CDs available to the entire family.

For the next two hours the things we had brought from Alva Lu's were divided up and loaded into vehicles. It was a massive undertaking but one that needed to be done to ensure that everyone had an opportunity to share in it. After everyone left, we had a couple hours with Jeanie and Scott before they left to go to the Kirwan's where Maren was staying.

These past few days have been spent returning equipment to the Shilling House and Kesler's, writing thank you notes, clearing away the stuff in the garage, and getting back into our regular routine. Yesterday as I made the rounds with shopping and deliveries, I had several people comment on what a sweet funeral service it had been. When all was said and done, I think that Dad would be grateful for how his life was portrayed and at how many people took time to express love and condolences.

I thought I would like to include two notes that arrived at our home which sum up the sentiments of the many who wrote us:

"Allan Larsen" has been a name we have always known...in farming, in politics and as a good and honorable man, and his family continues his legacy in this community we all call home. You are in our thoughts and prayers always." Angelene Parrish

"I do hope you have been able to have some measure of comfort as your family has gathered together to celebrate the legacy and life of your extraordinary father. I know this alone has brought peace to your heart. I met your dad on several occasions over the past many years. I always found his infectious smile and warm greeting to be a highlight of the occasion. His selfless service to community and church are examples to emulate." Dave Smith (Grand Teton Council President, Director of Idaho Potato Growers and Shippers)

Yesterday when I was in town, I thought about how normally I would be including a trip to the ECF in my day. That is over now and although I am extremely grateful that Allan has escaped the prison of his deteriorating body, I can't help but know that there will be days that I will wish that I could just drop in and visit with him for a while and share my concerns and joys with him. He has been a wonderful father to me for nearly 40 years and my life has been blessed by his goodness and love.

In closing I would like to relate (with Gary's permission) two dreams that he has had in the last 15 years that have significance for our family. The first was just shortly after Grandpa met and married Alva Lu. Gary had been struggling with some feelings regarding Dad's affection for Alva Lu and one night he had a dream. In this dream Barbara came to him and told him that he should not be troubled about Grandpa's love for Alva Lu. She told Gary that in a few short years they would be together again and that at that time they would rediscover their love for each other. The dream brought a measure of comfort to Gary and the rest of us.

The second dream happened last week. It was so vivid that Gary awoke, as if someone was shaking him and making sure that he remembered it. It was at a time in the night that he isn't normally awake and so he felt that his awakening was intentional. He dreamed that he saw Barbara and Allan walking along together, arm in arm. His impression was that they were very happy. That is a sweet picture for all of us to remember as we close this chapter of the Allan F. Larsen life.

March 16, 2005

[Dad] We were a little late last week because of the long account of the last couple weeks of Dad's life and the funeral, etc. Life still hasn't gotten back to normal, but I guess that is normal around here.

The last couple of weeks there has been a lot of media attention on the Scouts in this area and a case of sexual abuse that occurred eight years ago at Little Lemhi. The perpetrator was a returned missionary, from a good family, a trusted staff member. The publicity has primarily come because of the efforts of a gay reporter with his

own agenda to besmirch the Church and the Boys Scouts. Locally, we haven't heard or seen much impact from it, but it certainly has not been pleasant. It reminds me of the time I went to visit my folks after Dad had lost the election for governor. Mom said, "Steve, do you know what happiness is? Not having your name in the paper!!"

We organized the new Moreland 7th Branch--a young single adult branch with Mike Larsen as President and Jim Wheeler and Kim Poole as counselors. We also had to call a new high councilor to replace Mike and we called Dennis Leavitt. In addition, on Sunday we announced that Elder Charles Didier would be coming to our stake conference at the end of April and he would be reorganizing the stake presidency. We received instructions from him as to scheduling, procedures, and conference speakers and subjects. So, it is going to really happen. To be totally honest, I haven't felt any significant feelings that I would be going from the frying pan into the fire. So, at this point we are just hanging on for the ride and anxious to see what will happen.

Last Saturday we had an LOS Relations Meeting with President Dahlquist, the YM General President. At the 9:00 Stake President's meeting we had all but 12 of the 55 stakes in our council represented. In the general session we had around 1200 present and it was a powerful meeting with lots of great talks and thoughts about the relationship of Scouting and the Aaronic Priesthood. Then we broke into groups according to involvement with Scouts, Varsity Scouts, and Venturers. It was a great meeting! President Dahlquist is certainly a strong advocate for Scouting, Wood Badge training, and the relationship between Scouting advancement and the Duty to God program.

We are still getting sympathy cards and flowers and people stop me wherever I go to say they were sorry to hear about my Dad. He was so widely known and respected and so many people genuinely loved him. A thought about the funeral that I don't think we recorded in Sue's account. It was interesting to have the viewing Sunday night in the Hawker Funeral home which used to be our old stake tabernacle where Dad had spent so many hours in meetings and interviews. Also, the funeral itself being held in the West Stake Center, a building that he was primarily responsible for constructing as Stake President. The wonderful organ that is in that building wouldn't be there if it wasn't for the efforts of Dad and Mom to obtain a quality organ during the construction of that building. Scott and Karen's piano/organ duet at the conclusion of the funeral was such an appropriate tribute. Most of the time I'm okay, but every once in a while, I have a surge of emotion and tears with thoughts of Dad.

[Mom] Last week about did Daddy and I under with all the tying up of loose ends from the funeral. Last night I finally felt like I could see the light of day. Becky called part way through the week and asked if I would come visit them while John and Laurel were there for spring break. She offered to buy my ticket and said that they were already planning some fun excursions and that I could just join in with the rest of them.

At first, I thought that there was no way that I could break away at such short notice, but once I started the process of doing some shuffling, I could see that maybe this would be a great time to make a trip. SaraKay is through with the play, doesn't start driver's ed until May, isn't doing track this year, and her Crawford Cup and Blackfoot Music Festival and Scholarship tryouts aren't until later in April.

Also, the yard isn't ready for spring clean-up and planting and my Enrichment Night is all planned and set to go for April. The only thing that I would miss is going to conference with Daddy, but he said he was alright with that so I guess I am leaving for Korea on March 27th and will return on April 5th. The trip there and back is giving me some cause for panic, but I have several tips from Becky, John and Laurel, and Dot. Hopefully I will be able to make the necessary transfers and arrive safely.

We have appreciated the things we got from the Barbara and Allan Larsen estate. We have a couple new chairs, and some other items that we have integrated into our decor and it has given me a lift to have something new.

We have all been suffering from colds the last couple weeks but no one is very sick. This weekend is Laurel Conference and I have a presentation that I'll be giving on Money Management and College Prep. I will teach four sessions with about 50 girls per session. Mark and Rita are coming Friday night so Mark can referee at an alumni tournament Garen is involved in. We hope to have time to spend some with them before they return to Denver.

I am getting back into my walking routine and that feels good after several weeks of hit and miss. We

are anxious to hear from Dave and Andrea as her time for delivery is nearing. Her mother will be there starting this Thursday and be able to stay for several weeks with them.

Mike and Marci are in Mexico on a belated honeymoon trip and will be returning this next Sunday. They were due to fly out on Saturday but a luggage truck drove into the airplane after they had boarded and they had to all unload and spend the night in Chicago until the plane was cleared for flying the next day. Mike just has a lot of bad luck when it comes to flying. Hopefully the rest of the trip will be wonderful.

Tim is putting in 70-hour weeks with his internship and is ready to drop by week's end. He will be through with his internship and back in school in less than a month.

March 21, 2005

[Mom] We've had a busy weekend. Mark and Rita arrived Friday afternoon and stayed through Sunday morning. Although we had a whirlwind day on Saturday, we were able to get in a lot of visiting and thoroughly enjoyed their stay. Mark was refereeing for an alumni basketball tournament that was held on Friday and Saturday and he seemed to enjoy being back in the community and seeing old friends. Just prior to their leaving Colorado before Dad's passing, Rita's mother and dad took a turn for the worse and so when they return to Thornton, Mark and Rita are going to move her parents in with them. They certainly are attentive to Jessica and all her needs. We love and admire them so much.

Randy's job seems to be settling down except for the fact that occasionally he will hit a night when as he puts it, "the knife and gun club" are busy and then it becomes a nightmare to field all the films sent his way without any backup. They have recently purchased a new car and are planning a trip to Iowa to coincide with Mike's graduation the third of June.

Mike and Marci are due to return from their honeymoon today. Hopefully they haven't had any more incidents that would impact on their get-away. I know Mike is finishing up his patient requirements as well as hunt for a job.

No family news from Paul and Jenny. The Spanish Eider's quorum that Paul has been serving in is being reorganized into a separate entity so he is anticipating a release as EQP.

Tim worked 78 hours last week and is looking forward to mid-April when his commitment will be over and he can get back into school. He said that he has learned so much! He enjoys the work but doesn't see too much future at the firm where he is working because they are fairly small and have only hired 3 interns in the last 20 years.

Steve and Bonnie have made arrangements for Bonnie's brother, Kimball, and his family to rent their home starting June 1st. Kimball has a job teaching seminary in Cache Valley and they will show the house and continue trying to sell it. Steve and Bonnie will pack up and leave June 1st for Tennessee. How we hate to see them go!

Daddy's work has settled down a little bit and his FOS campaign is nearly completed. Life has also slowed a little for SaraKay (to her dismay) but she has several performances coming up in April and is grateful for some breathing space.

Sam's story received honors again this year and he attended a young author's conference and presented it. The judges asked him where he got the idea for it and he said, "I lived it!" It was an account of their pet tarantula's escapades a few years ago. He also is playing in a Jazz band and Honors Band and enjoying that. Keep up the good work, Sam!

Most of you are aware that I am leaving Easter Sunday for Korea. Yes, I am nervous about making the trip alone, but, no, I am not going to let my fears get the best of me and keep me from going. Becky has given me my ticket and detailed instructions and Dot even called to assure me that I would be able to make the proper connections and survive. While I am gone, SaraKay and Daddy will be fending for themselves and they will make the trip for general conference and share that fun time together. It very well may be the last time that we attend conference in the Conference Center since the stake presidency is being released at stake conference in April. I know that Daddy will miss the wonderful association he has had over the last four years.

Don and his son, Brent, arrived last night and spent the night so that they could get an early start this morning on the kitchen. Don has until mid-April when he starts a new job and he is refinishing our kitchen cabinets. He enjoys woodworking and has been doing odd jobs since his graduation in December. We mentioned to him that our cabinets could use a face lift and so we contracted with him and Brent, who just returned from Brazil, to do them for us. We all got up at five

this morning and took everything out of the kitchen cupboards, hung plastic, and they have been sanding things down for the last three hours. Hopefully the messy part will be finished up by tonight and I can move back in tomorrow while they varnish the doors and hang them.

Steve took some pictures at the cemetery. It seems like so long ago that all of that happened, but it really was just three weeks ago that Grandpa died. Feelings are still tender for Daddy and I noticed for Mark as well.

[Dad] Just a few notes of my own to add. Yes, the feelings are still close to the surface and I miss Dad terribly. It is hard not to drive over to the ECF and to walk down to his room. So many people still mention how sorry they were to hear about his passing. It was really nice to have Mark and Rita & Jessica here for a couple days.

Sunday was Ward Conference for Moreland 3rd and 6th. We really had some great meetings, wonderful talks, fine music, and it is good to have ward conferences over again for another year, perhaps for my last time in this role.

April 7, 2005

[Dad] It is wonderful to have Mom back from Korea; SaraKay and I really did miss her. We had a great time general conference weekend. We left here on Friday afternoon, spent the night with Grandma Ilene, and watched Saturday morning session with her. Then we met Tim at the Shiloh and went to the afternoon session together. SaraKay worked on homework while Tim and I went to the Priesthood session together and then we went out to eat at Olive Garden with the Shipley's. Sunday morning we watched the session in the Joseph Smith Memorial building, Tim left to go back to Provo, and SaraKay and I stayed for the afternoon session in the Conference Center before we headed home. Our favorite talk was Elder Bednar's on tender mercies.

[Mom] The big news of the week is that Andrea gave birth to a baby boy at 2:45 p.m. on Saturday. He was 8 lb. 4 oz. and as of yet, is known only as "the brother of Joseph." Andrea has felt pretty good except for a couple of bouts with a migraine that her doctor thinks is hormonal and due to her milk coming in. As for the usual problem with her tailbone, that has not been an issue this time and she has actually been able to sit and rock the baby, a luxury she has not had with some of the other children until several weeks after their birth. Congratulations to her and David. It's always a relief to have the baby arrive safe and sound. We are so grateful too, that Laurel is there with them, sharing this special event and helping out.

Andrea did mention that when she started into labor on April 1st, she was worried that she would deliver on April Fool's Day but she was glad she didn't have him until the next day. Also, she commented that having a baby this big puts her in the major leagues, or something like that. Steph still holds the record for the biggest baby at 10 pounds!

The other big news of the week is that Steve and Bonnie sold their home and will be moving April 30th. They have contracted with a moving company that does the hauling of household items and the towing of their car and so they will load the truck and then fly out on April 30th and meet the moving van on Tuesday of that next week. What a major change for all of them.

As you are aware, I left on Easter Sunday for Korea. For several weeks I had been gathering all the necessary clothes for my trip as well as the items that Becky and John and Laurel were having me pick up and bring with me.

When Shauntel came the Thursday prior to Easter she asked if I was ready for my trip. I commented that I needed to go shopping one last time since there were still some things that I hadn't gotten yet. She suggested that I take some of the funds from the Asian account to help with my expenses. She wrote me out a check for $250 and I really appreciated it. Needless to say, it wasn't hard to find places that I could use it. Thanks to everyone who has so generously contributed to that fund over this past year!

I appreciated Daddy and SaraKay letting me take advantage of this opportunity to go to Asia. When Becky called and offered to buy my ticket, I wasn't sure how I felt about leaving for so many days and also, how I felt about traveling alone to a foreign country. But, I decided that I shouldn't let fear keep me from it.

I was grateful that Daddy and I got our passports last year. Shortly after John and Laurel left for China, we decided that we should have them in case there was any kind of an emergency. Prior to leaving, Daddy, Becky and Chet talked me through everything that I would have to do. Chet gave me detailed information on transferring to the international terminal in San Francisco and

Chet's mom, Dot, even called one evening and gave me tips on making the trip. Steph and Shauntel gave me some wonderful books to take along to help pass the time and Grandma Richards encouraged me to put aside my fears and just enjoy myself. With everyone's blessing, I moved ahead, and except for a night when I dreamed of being stranded in an airport where everyone spoke Korean, I managed to keep my fears under control.

My flight schedule included layovers in SLC and San Francisco. Fortunately, I had enough time to find the right gate and get myself situated. I have learned over the years that everything is clearly posted if I am observant and to "just ask" if I have any problems.

My most embarrassing moment of the trip happened as I was going through security in San Francisco. They required all passengers to remove shoes (which I had done in Idaho Falls also) and to put carry-ons through the scanners. They then instructed me to remove my sweater that I was wearing over a sheer white sleeveless shell. I told the security person, (while politely opening my sweater to show her) that I didn't have a modest blouse on under the sweater and she immediately called for another security person to come and take me to a holding place while they found a woman officer that could use the wand on me. And all of this in front of the hundreds of other passengers filing through. Well, I had to stand while she ran her wand over me and asked questions and finally, she returned my sweater and I was set free. What an embarrassment! As you can imagine, on the way back home, I wore a blouse with sleeves and did exactly what they told me to do!

After getting through security, I began looking for signs that would lead me to the international terminal. I knew that I had to leave the regular airport and go somewhere else since my flight was with Korean Air, so I wondered about just following some Asian people. Usually there are airport officials available to question but for some reason there wasn't anyone in uniform anywhere. I saw a very professional looking white man with a suitcase and I approached him and asked about the international terminal. His response was in a foreign language and I sheepishly realized that all whites aren't going to speak English. Anyway, I found a large area full of Asians and it was the right spot and I sat down, only to hear my name called over the loudspeaker. Of course, I thought that someone back home had had an accident or something and I immediately went to the flight counter only to discover that my ticket needed to be redone.

When I finally boarded the flight, I breathed a sigh of relief. I kept asking myself, "How in the world has Becky made this trip with three small children!?" I still can't imagine it.

The airplane was absolutely beautiful and I was fortunate to have an aisle seat so that I didn't have to climb over others when I needed to use the restroom. The minute I boarded, Korean was the preferred language. I was immediately impressed with the stewardesses dressed neatly in prim blue suits, black hair pulled carefully back in a bun, and their skin so white and beautiful that they almost didn't look real. (Chet told me that many Koreans use a skin cream that has bleach in it to whiten their skin. They also avoid getting any sun on their faces as I was soon to observe. Women out walking on a sunny day would wear billed hats or even long visors that would fold down to entirely shield them from the sun's rays.)

From the minute the flight took off, they started feeding us juices, drinks, pretzels, nuts, etc. Besides that, they served us two complete meals. They were so sweet and gracious. Becky suggested that I take some sleeping pills with me to help me sleep and after we had been in the air several hours, they turned off the lights, closed the blinds on the windows and tried to create an environment where we could sleep, but I was too hyper to even think of sleeping and I sat through two movies, one with Korean subtitles, and one with English. I read, visited with my Filipino seatmate, and tried to sleep but to no avail.

One helpful thing the airlines did was to flash across the movie screen a chart showing a world map and an airplane flying along which simulated our course and then they would show the time at our destination, and the number of hours until we reached Seoul. It was a good way to keep track of where we were and how far was left. I guess it is the airline's way of answering the question, "Are we there yet?"

Becky and Chet were there to greet me when I arrived and drove me home, about an hour's drive. Of course, with it being night in Seoul, I wasn't able to take in too much of the scenery but I did see several immense bridges spanning the Hong River. They were beautifully lit up and Becky commented that the Koreans are very concerned about aesthetics and that everything they do is

not only practical but pleasing to the eye and soul. I was to take notice of this time and time again in the days ahead.

The apartment complex where they live is in a very nice part of town. Their apartment is on the seventh floor and the front room is ceiling to floor glass windows facing the street. There is a glass deck that extends the length of the apartment and gives them additional room for the kids to play. It was awesome to watch the hustle and bustle of the city from their vantage point on the 7th floor.

When I arrived, I met Sister Flora, their Filipino housekeeper who has been working for them now for several weeks. She is an attractive, small woman (54) who comes each day about 9 and helps Becky with whatever she needs. It was immediately obvious to me how much she was needed since Becky spends so much time with things like walking Maddie to the bus stop (about two blocks) and Tate to his bus stop. With two two-year-old's it is nearly impossible for Becky to go anywhere alone and it has been such a blessing for her to leave for a few minutes and not have to take everyone with her. Both Larsen and Cole take good naps and so Becky schedules her shopping trips and other errands for those times and can leave the boys with Sister Flora. Living in the situation she does has its own set of problems and I was in awe of how much walking and going her life entails. Keeping the four kids calm and together to navigate the elevators each time they leave to go anywhere is a major accomplishment.

I was so grateful for Sister Flora and all her help. She is a member of the Church and is good with the children and holds the line with them when Becky isn't there. I arrived on Tuesday evening and the next morning I greeted John and Laurel who were staying in a guest room on the 30th floor. Since the apartments are quite small, the guest rooms are available in the building for visitors. It worked very nicely and gave both families a chance to unwind after a hectic day. I was so grateful for the time I had with John and Laurel and their sweet family. Visiting in Korea the same week that they were was an added bonus!

J. Cole is a delightful little boy. He is small but very wiry and bright. I could see how Becky and Chet have had to be very consistent in their discipline, but he is obedient and doing very well. The dynamics between him and Larsen are interesting but he fits in and seems to enjoy his new family. I visited both Maddie and Tate's schools and met their teachers and observed Becky teaching "Mozart Math" one morning. We walked to the grocery store (about a mile), went swimming, played in the playroom and on the playground. I tagged along everywhere. It was very interesting and enlightening.

Wednesday morning we went sight-seeing and visited a Buddhist temple and park. We learned that although Seoul is a bustling city, the people value the opportunity to get away in a quiet spot and there are many parks, temple complexes, and palaces that are surrounded by quiet, wooded areas where the people can walk, hike, and spend time with their families. I was impressed with how much land had been set aside for these parks and at how quiet and clean they were.

It was so interesting to learn more about Buddhism and about the ancient emperors and their ways of living. It nearly blows my mind to think of how far back these civilizations go! As far as I could tell, the people must have been righteous enough that they were never swept off the earth like the Jaredites, Nephites, Minoans, and ancient peoples of Pompeii and Sodom and Gomorrah. I think that says a lot for them and their goodness. What a treat for me to learn of their history and heritage.

On Saturday evening the Seely's hosted a get-together with friends from the branch and they blessed Cole as a part of the evening's events. Chet gave a beautiful blessing and little Cole was obviously pleased to be the "little man of the hour." I couldn't help thinking how miraculous it is for him to have been plucked from the orphanage and his life put on a different path and direction.

It was enjoyable to meet some of their close friends in the branch. All the children who attended had the time of their lives, running around and playing together. I could see that all of these people were grateful for the association, especially when they are so far from home and in a foreign land. Many of them brought food for the dinner and Becky's traditional spaghetti was a big hit.

Wednesday night we rode the subway to the temple. That was a totally new experience for me and very interesting. I was impressed with the cleanliness of the terminals and cars, of the politeness of the people, and of the efficiency of public transportation. I think the ride clear across town only cost 90 cents! Since the subway stop was quite a way from the temple, again we had quite a jaunt before getting there. It is interesting

to me that since space is at such a premium, both the church building and the temple are tucked away, up some obscure alley, not even visible from the main street. We walked up an alley that was barely big enough for a small car and all at once, there was the temple. It was fun to be there with John and Laurel as well and amazing to think that there we all were, so far from home and together.

Most of the senior missionaries that worked in the temple knew Becky since she had just taken them all on a tour of the city the previous week. They were very complimentary of all the Seely's are doing to strengthen the branch. I was amazed that Becky could navigate the city as well as she does. She and Chet both do very well with the traffic and seem to be able to get around remarkably well.

The traffic is amazing. Between the taxi's, the buses, and all the small buses of the private schools, and the private cars, it is pretty crazy. But, everyone was patient and friendly and gracious and I never saw anyone irritated despite the closeness of the vehicles to one another. Some intersections didn't even have traffic signs posted and everyone just politely took turns feeding into the stream of traffic. I couldn't help comparing it to the U.S. and marveling at the cooperative feelings.

That is probably the single most amazing thing I observed on my trip. The Koreans are so polite, clean, orderly and gracious. The other interesting thing was that I didn't see the immodesty, tattoos, piercings, wild hair, and other things that are so prevalent in our teen culture here. It was not at all uncommon to see groups of students, walking down the streets, arm in arm, smartly dressed in their uniforms, and smiling pleasantly. They seem to have an innocence about them that we have lost in so many of our youth. The adults too are very particular about their dress and the buildings, sidewalks, and public places were so well maintained and clean.

Everyone who helped us, whether it was the bellboy, a parking lot attendant, grocery clerk, or neighbor, was sweet and gracious! And even the parking lot attendants wore uniforms and bowed to us as we drove past.

One morning before John and Laurel left, we took all the kids to the swimming pool that was a part of the complex. When we got there the pool managers were not going to let us all in since we had so many children and Becky had to really beg and plead to get permission. I thought about how "kid friendly" our Utah/Idaho area is and at how hard it is to live in a place where there aren't that many small children. Many times, Becky commented that she felt like they lived "in a fish bowl." I could understand that better after being there. It puts a lot of pressure on the family to look sharp and not be too loud and obnoxious.

I thoroughly enjoyed the chance to attend their meetings with them. It was testimony meeting since they get general conference a week delayed. The testimonies were beautiful and it was interesting to see the variety of people in the branch and hear some of their conversion stories. I felt right at home with the senior missionary couples and also got to meet some investigators who Chet is working with each Sunday. He and Becky also hosted a missionary discussion at their home one night for one of the teachers at Tate's school. I know they are having an impact.

One of my favorite things was to watch Chet speak in Korean to the surprise of the native Koreans. They were in awe of how well he spoke (as was I) and they expressed their surprise and delight with big smiles, bowing heads, and laughter. I'm sure that he faces that every day he is there as does Becky with all the stares and touches when her three blonde children walk down the street. And of course, Cole, with the other three, gets his share of curious looks, too.

It was an added treat to have some time with John and Laurel before they flew out Friday morning. On Thursday night after the kids went to sleep, we sat on the floor in the hall outside their room and visited for several hours. They, too, are having some interesting and challenging experiences, but they seem to be taking them in their stride and doing well.

I came home feeling a little more informed about Korea and a lot more at peace regarding Becky and Chet's situation. They have a lovely home, a fine family, good job, and lots of wonderful friends, both in and out of the church. Although life has its challenges, I think they are finding ways to survive and I know that it will continue to get better as time passes. Language is such a major barrier for Becky; as she gets more comfortable with that, she will be better able to handle her challenges.

One of the most interesting places we visited was the temple complex. There was some sort of celebration going on and lots of notes attached to colorful lanterns, speeches coming over the

loudspeakers, and people entering and exiting the temples. It was possible to look into the temples at the worshippers (Chet reassured me that it wasn't bad manners) and see the beautiful and colorful interior designs. The worship involved a lot of bowing, kneeling, and then rising in succession on small mats that were placed by the patrons who were praying. It was very reverent and a peaceful feeling prevailed. I regretted that I hadn't read about Korea and its customs and history before going.

On Friday night Maddie, Becky and I went shopping at a wonderful open-air market which had all sorts of things from food, groceries, to shoes, clothes, and souvenirs. It was so crowded and there was loud music playing and hordes of people. I kept worrying that I was going to get lost but we managed to stick together and we had a great time. On Monday Becky's friend offered to take us to a similar day market and so we took the bus and arrived at a wonderful shopping area that was jam packed full of anything and everything imaginable. What a fun excursion. My only regret was that I didn't anticipate the wonderful shopping and take Christmas money to bring some things home.

April 12, 2005

[Mom] The name for the new arrival in the Boise Larsen household is McKay Stephen Larsen. I know that several of you were campaigning for John Paul but I guess he will be named for a prophet instead of the Pope.

Stephani and kids came on Sunday and we had a thoroughly enjoyable time talking about their upcoming Trek, loaning them hats and aprons, showing them our video and then having Steph share with us her research on how many of her ancestors came west on the Mormon Trail. She read to us several histories of women on my side of the family who truly did some amazing things! I appreciated that she and the kids have been getting acquainted with their progenitors. Sam also gets to go on the Trek although he will not quite be 14. I loaned him one of our great hats from the costume box. It has gone on two Treks already and he looks like a real pioneer in it!

I just got off the phone with Jenny. Today was Paul's oral evaluation of his project and he presented information for a while and then the professors questioned him for quite a while and then he went out into the hall to await their decision. Several of his student associates who were involved in their own presentations had been in the hall for quite a while and he was only out there for about four minutes. When he was called back in, his mentor said, "The ones that fail get called back in from the hall quickly. No, I'm just joking. You passed!" What a big relief. Jenny was cooking pizza for a major celebration and Paul was so pleased.

On chat Sunday night Steve and Bonnie told us that on their brief trip to Tennessee they bought a beautiful home in a place called Spring Hill, about a half hour's drive from Nashville. It is in the same ward as their friends are in. We are pleased that they were able to find one that is ready for immediate occupancy.

I called Grandma today to talk about things and she didn't know David and Andrea had a new son. She commented that counting Cole and McKay, she was now at 60 great-grandchildren. Tiffany, Charles' daughter, is expecting twins anytime and Trish and Chad's baby is due shortly. The ultrasound showed that the baby has a bowel obstruction and so in order to get a surgery performed the minute it is born, Trish is going to deliver the baby in Salt Lake. Of course, it is a grave concern to them and we all need to remember them in our prayers.

[Dad] Last year, for one of the major accomplishments at work, I received an American Express gift card for $500.00. We hadn't used it yet and it couldn't be turned into cash, so yesterday I used it to buy a new bike. It is a Raleigh, 27 speed, aluminum frame--a real beauty. I am anxious to go for a ride but the wind has been ferocious and cold.

Work has been pretty satisfying with reaching 107% of Blackfoot's FOS goal again. We are getting close to $100,000 pledged, which I think is a real tribute to the generosity of people in this area and an indication of their belief in Scouting despite the bad press we have gotten this spring.

Saturday, I worked over the handles from our cabinets--sanding them off, staining them and putting on a coat of varnish. They look so much better and really tie in with the job Don did on the doors. Sue and I are really pleased and satisfied with the way the kitchen looks!

April 18, 2005

[Mom] It's raining outside today, a soft drizzle that has on occasion turned to snow. What a blessing for the farmers in the area who still do not know if they will have water for this year's crop. The water dispute that continues to occupy the pages of our

newspapers is still being negotiated and the article yesterday said that at this point, farmers are depending on rain and snow to get them though until the matter is settled. I know that Richard Tominaga has been heavily involved in the negotiations and each fast and testimony Sunday, his remarks hint at the trauma he is experiencing because of the uncertainty regarding his water rights. So far this spring we have had enough moisture to keep things growing and we all recognize what a blessing it is.

The weekend was exhausting. SaraKay had her festival performance at 10:55 Saturday morning and she had been practicing and stressing over it for weeks. It was like we just couldn't focus on anything else until it was finally done. On Friday night Daddy gave her a blessing and then he left early on Saturday to supervise the Explorer Olympics at the Blackfoot High School. SaraKay got up and got ready and kept practicing until time to leave at 10:30. When we arrived, Jean Petersen, who was the receptionist for our judge, commented that this judge had been exceptionally difficult on the kids. I didn't tell SaraKay that, but Jean said that of the 20 students judged so far that morning by this particular judge, only 2 had high enough scores to qualify for scholarship tryouts.

When SaraKay went in, I watched through the door. She played her Mozart beautifully but about two lines before the end, she stopped completely and just sat there. Finally, after what seemed like several minutes, the judge walked over and showed her the music and she began and finished her song. The second number, Autumn, was performed almost without flaw. When she came out of the room, SaraKay felt pretty good about it but we weren't sure how the judge would dock her for the memory lapse.

After performing her concerto with Linnea later, we returned to the high school to get the results of her solo competition and discovered that she received a 97, one point less than she needed for scholarship contending. She was pretty shook up and yet I told her that after her concerto I overheard Linnea and another music teacher discussing the possibility of extending try-outs to anyone who received a 96+ since there weren't going to be enough students with the higher scores. Anyway, upon returning home we received a call from Linnea and they had opened it up and she did get to compete that afternoon. When all was said and done, SaraKay took third place with Zac and her friend Angela Winder coming in ahead of her. She was elated and thrilled to receive the $150 towards a camp this summer.

That evening as SaraKay and I left a reception, we were talking about Crawford Cup and her concert dress that I remade for her last November. She used it for an orchestra concert and realized that it just didn't give her the freedom of movement that she needs when playing an instrument. We decided to drop in at the mall and see if we could find something that would work. We had less than an hour before the mall closed but we did find a little summer cardigan that looks cute with her black dress and so hopefully she will be able to make it work for her.

When we returned at 10:00 p.m. Daddy was still gone and when he finally came through the back door, he was so crippled up from being on his feet all day for the Olympics as well as the big VIP Scouting event at the Snake River High School that he plopped into his chair and moaned. He took some medicine and went to bed. He is taking some muscle relaxants but he is still hobbling around.

Tim called yesterday to report that he finished his internship and did well. He was the firm's top producer out of six seasonal interns. He completed 410 returns during his three months and the second highest came in at 330, then another at 220. He received a lot of positive feedback from the employees and added "Top Producer" to his resume for future use. He has applied for several different summer internships and has some strings to pull with the one in Wisconsin that he is interested in. He found out Sunday in bishopric meeting that one of the counselor's father-in-law is the owner of one of the companies he has applied to. The counselor's wife's brother is over the department that Tim is interested in so they said they would make some phone calls and put in a good word for him. One of the other jobs is with investments and, of course, Tim would love to have that experience, too, so we'll see.

I appreciated Mike's update on his job situation. Seems like our family is in flux again this summer. I try not to let it bother me, but sometimes it drives me crazy, worrying about all the comings and goings (mostly goings.)

This weekend will be a big one as Daddy prepares for conference and I help with the meals for the General Authorities that are coming to reorganize the stake presidency. It's never easy to be

released and I'm dreading the day but it has been a sweet experience for us both. Keep Daddy in your prayers.

[Dad] Last week was a busy one as we were working to get as much Friends of Scouting money in as we could so the council looked good at the Council Recognition Night despite the bad press we have had lately. It worked--we ended up with 91% of our goal compared to 83% last year at the same time. Blackfoot is over our fair share at 107%.

One of the big items on my agenda last week was getting ready for and helping with the Venturing Olympics which were held at the Blackfoot High School on Saturday. We didn't have that great a turnout, but had a great time with those that were there and came in under budget--so I guess I did my job. It made a long day when I had to be there at 7:00 in the morning and then when we were through, I had to go to the Snake River High School and help with the Recognition Night.

SaraKay's festival was at the Blackfoot High School's new auditorium and I slipped in for most of her playing and to be supportive. I recognize my bias, but I think she did awesome and at the scholarship tryouts she should have placed higher than she did at fourth. But the $150 she won will help pay for some good workshops this summer. Last night for FHE we went back to Blackfoot High for a recital for all the winners and runnersup (or is it runnerups?)

The Recognition night was wonderful--a great program; it's always so reaffirming to hear of the countless hours of service given by the Silver Beaver recipients. From Blackfoot we recognized Will Thomas and DaLon Esplin--two very deserving recipients. Part of my role was to obtain the building, checkout master keys to get us in where we needed to be, get a couple boys in full uniform to help with the awards, arrange for the sound and lights man from the school, and so on. My local contacts are always needed when we put together these kinds of council events in Blackfoot.

We are looking forward to stake conference this weekend. The temple session on Friday night is the beginning and then we go to interviews all morning Saturday and spilling over into the afternoon. My interview is at 9:20 a.m. as Elder Didier interviews the current stake presidency, high council, bishops, and a few others that we feel should be considered that aren't in those groups, such as Berkley Wray, Jim Wheeler, and Bishop Jenks. I will conduct the Priesthood Leadership session at 4:00 that afternoon and speak in the night session for all adults at 7:00. We will have one session at 10:00 on Sunday. Then, that night we have a kickoff meeting for our regional Youthfest which will be held this summer involving the five Blackfoot stakes and the American Falls Stake.

May 1, 2005

[Mom] It is a beautiful spring day outside. The sky is blue and everything is greening up. I spent some time this past week working in the yard and Daddy mowed the lawn again yesterday. I guess that winter is over!

Our trip to Logan was a quick but productive one. We arrived about 8:30 a.m. and Steve and Bonnie were just finishing up breakfast and rarin' to go. A large moving van trailer was parked in their driveway which was packed with all their belongings and secured the night before with the help of friends and neighbors. After a few minutes of planning, I started vacuuming and Daddy manned the shampooer. Soon Stephani arrived and she and I washed out the kitchen cabinets and tile. With almost everything empty, the job went quickly. Steph and I got in some wonderful visiting time and Daddy and Steve cleaned carpets upstairs after finishing the ground floor. Bonnie kept one step ahead of us with packing up the last of the children's suitcases for their flight on Saturday. For lunch we had lasagna that someone had brought to the house and we continued to move from room to room, putting the final touches on floors, spot cleaning the walls, and sweeping out the storage room. It moved right along without a glitch and by 2:00 that afternoon we had finished.

We had our van loaded with the mower we bought from Steve as well as other sundry items that needed a home. Thankfully, there was still room for Daddy and I, although barely. By 2:30 we had said our goodbyes and were on our way home.

It was obvious that the family was excited and eager to get their move behind them. They were scheduled to fly out of SLC at noon on Saturday into LA, have a four-hour layover and then fly directly to Nashville, arriving about 10:30 p.m. The house is ready for occupancy and their furnishings were to arrive on Tuesday. I'm sure the next few days will be hectic, but they were excited and grateful that everything fell into place for them to make this move and get into a home

in Tennessee. We wish them "God Speed" in the days ahead.

On Friday we left at 3:00 to go to Boise. We had arranged for David and Laurel and Anna Sue to meet us at the McDonald's by the Eagle exit and Dave picked up SaraKay and took her with them to the Nampa Theatre's production of "The Sound of Music." They had purchased season tickets to the performances and were planning this night out before we cemented our plans and they included SaraKay in. We delivered SaraKay at the appointed hour and then Daddy and I continued on to spend the evening with Andrea, Joseph, Chantelle, and of course, the man of the hour, McKay Stephen.

He is a beautiful little boy with a Cottam look about him and beautiful strawberry blonde hair. He was so contented and sweet. He ate regularly and just looked around with his big blue eyes or slept. It was obvious that the kids thought he was pretty special! We enjoyed "loving on him" all evening and retired about 10 for bed. David and bunch arrived a little later and quietly got to bed. The next morning both Anna Sue and Joseph had soccer games and Daddy and SaraKay accompanied them while Andrea and I spent the morning entertaining Chantelle and McKay and visiting. We packed a picnic lunch for the soccer fans and they arrived home about 12:30 from their games.

Daddy took a good nap before we left and that gave the kids time to play tennis and Dave and I a chance to visit. We also took a guided tour of their yard and most recent projects. David and Andrea recently installed rebar attached to their fence and planted grapes along the fence line. The vines will be pruned and guided to attach to the rebar and it will make harvesting the grapes much easier. They have also started a raspberry and blackberry patch and have several fruit trees. One young peach tree produced softball-size peaches last year and already has the blossoms for another good crop. It was amazing to me how much they could grow in their yard although it isn't even an acre of ground. They also are doing vegetables and have a rhubarb plant. It's interesting how much more variety they can have than we can produce because of the difference in the climate.

After arriving home yesterday about six, I received a call from Nate. He was en route to Washington for Maureen's sister's funeral. Grandma Ilene had told me that Ruth had been killed in an automobile accident but she didn't have the details. Apparently, Ruth's daughter was driving on the freeway by Fort Hall and a car was merging onto the freeway and the daughter saw it almost on top of her and she quickly tried to move into the other lane of traffic, overcorrected and rolled the car. The EMTs that attended the family thought that the gash on the teenage son's head was fatal and life-flighted him to EIRMC in Idaho Falls where Chad and Nate met him after a quick trip from Jackson Hole where they are finishing up a job. What a relief when it was discovered that the gash wasn't as bad as expected and he was fine. The daughter was treated and released that same day but Ruth's body was taken to a funeral home here in Blackfoot until the family was able to get it back to Washington. All this happened in my backyard and I didn't know a thing about it until Nate called yesterday. What a sad deal for Ruth's family. She leaves 8 children, three still unmarried. We sure don't know what tomorrow will bring. We express our condolences to Maureen's sweet family.

Today is our first Sunday in four years that Daddy is around to share the morning with us....the first of many adjustments he is making to his new status. This week he has been puttering around the yard and trying out his new bike. He took it to Boise and enjoyed riding it there on Saturday morning before the rest of us were awake and facing the day. I know I am going to enjoy having him around a little bit more although his work gets pretty involved as summer approaches. Hopefully he won't go too long before the Bishop will utilize him. I am probably getting released from my RS job since our president has sold her home and she and her husband will be building a new one in the months ahead.

Mike and Marci went to Colorado yesterday to interview for a job. I'm anxious to see what they found out. I think next week he will be interviewing in Wisconsin and then in Washington state. Tim received an offer from the company in Wisconsin and will be starting there on June 1st. I wish it would work for him to be there for Mike's graduation but his contract won't permit it. He is excited to not be selling again this year and to have another internship to add to his resume.

[Dad] I went out to ride this morning as Sue and SaraKay left for piano lessons and found a flat tire on my bike, so I decided to finish the family letter instead. On Sunday we received a call from the Bishop to serve as ward missionaries--and

more specifically as ward mission leader. We will be sustained and set apart next Sunday. We are excited for this opportunity to prepare for our missions and to serve together in a calling.

For my Boise early morning ride I rode up and down some hills and put my bike through its paces. It was a lot of fun, though it was pretty chilly when I first set out. One of the neatest parts of my ride was to ride around the cemeteries right next to Dave and Andrea's subdivision. The Idaho Military Cemetery is located there and is a beautiful site. It has a huge flag flying atop a flagpole that is located on a large hilltop. There are nice paved walkways and an ash spreading garden and beautifully manicured gardens and grass. It was a good challenge to ride up that hill--in low gear all the way--and to be able to look over the valley in several directions.

I echo Sue's comments about McKay--what a beautiful, peaceful baby. It was fun for me to go to the soccer games and watch Anna Sue and Joseph. Dave had his turn as referee for both of those games and did a good job.

Last night for FHE we did yard work. We were able to get a lot accomplished with digging out around the trees in front and pruning two of the apple trees. I hope they survive the "butch" cut they received.

Yesterday was a full day staff meeting. I had a presentation to make regarding Friends of Scouting and did a great job--of course. My service area--which includes Blackfoot, Arco, Menan, Roberts, Rigby, Ririe, Jackson, Teton, and Star Valley, is the first service area to reach our fair share. One of the other service areas is almost $50,000 short of their goal. We have a lot of pressure this time of year as we are getting ready for camp, finishing off our FOS campaign, trying to organize new units and meet our membership goals, and so on.

When we went to Wellsville to help Steve and Bonnie it was really raining and it turned to snow for part of the time as well. In fact, we had to drive through several areas where the road was marked with "flooding area" signs and there were small rivers running across the road and sometimes washing rocks and debris with it. As we knocked around in their empty house, I was reminded how huge it is. What a job to clean and maintain that much space as well as the big yard. I was reminded again of our desire to downsize and simplify our lives with a smaller yard and home. We are getting a lot closer to that reality as we look at retirement within five years.

May 9, 2005

[Mom] We've had a great weekend, complete with lots of cards, phone calls, greetings etc. for Mother's Day. Thank you! Since I heard from everyone, I thought I would give an update.

Steph and Linds have approached spring determined to finish up the sprinkler system and get the sod laid, but the cold, wet weather has brought everything to a halt until things dry out. Linds recently was called to work in the YM program and he is enjoying the chance to influence the programs his own boys are involved in.

Shauntel and Randy are house hunting. Randy's job has its good and bad days, depending on the numbers and difficulty of the x-rays but his 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. schedule seems to be working out better than the other schedule he was on. He also gets every other weekend off and that has helped considerably.

Jonie and Jeff were happy to hear that Tim and Mike and Marci may be moving to Green Bay this summer. There is a Pow-Wow there that they will be attending and they will try to see them while they are there.

Steve and Bonnie are settling in. Bonnie said it has been hard to feel like it is or ever will be home but Laurel gave lots of encouragement last night on chat and counseled her to be patient with all the changes that a move entails. Steve said he is enjoying the ward. (Today while I was walking, Zenith Baker, who also walks at the stake center, asked me if I had a son that had recently moved to Nashville. When I said that I did, he told me that his son lives in that same ward and mentioned it when he called last night. He said they were happy to have such a good family move into the ward. Small world!)

Dave and Andrea's pictures say it all. We appreciate them posting them for us to enjoy. A cause for concern in their life right now is the massive labor cuts HP is making and will continue to make in the months ahead.

Becky and Chet posted their holiday pictures of the resort where they stayed in the area where Chet spent six months of his mission. The kids really enjoyed having room to run and all the time on the beach.

John and Laurel's pics of the Three Gorges Area were also beautiful. I'm grateful that they are able to have time to see the country. When John called Sunday morning (Sunday night for him), I asked him how Laurel's Mother's Day had gone and he said their Primary Program wasn't nearly as nice as the one in their Michigan ward but they made it through and tried to make it special. It's an interesting challenge being a one-family branch!

Mike and Marci spent the weekend in Colorado investigating another job. They liked the clinic but weren't offered as much $$ as in Wisconsin, and so for now they are leaning towards Wisconsin. This week they fly to Washington state to see what it has to offer. The wonderful thing about these positions is that they offer salary and also help repay his student loans, so that is very enticing. If they choose to go to Green Bay, there will be about three weeks overlap with Tim during his internship and then they will have a two-year commitment and leave Green Bay the same time Paul and Jenny finish up in Madison (a 2 1/2-hour drive away). That would please them both. Mike hasn't mentioned it, but Marci told us that he received one of two Leadership Awards presented at a ceremony last week. He was selected from 70 graduates! Way to go, Mikey!

Paul and Jenny are touring Nauvoo and Kirtland with Jenny's parents this week. Jenny's two sisters are with them and Beth is having the time of her life playing with them while the grandparents spoil Ben. Ben has started to crawl and is in that get-into-everything stage. I can't believe he is that old.

Tim has accepted the internship in Green Bay and will be leaving the end of May, missing the last two weeks of his summer term classes. He made arrangements with his professors and is trying to finish up things early. He has to start June 1st so he will not be able to attend Mike's graduation on the third. He is in the process of lining up housing and enjoying the last few weeks substituting for the ward clerk, meeting all the new ward members for summer term. He has several girls he would like to meet and is trying to get that done before leaving in three weeks. Go for it, Tim.

SaraKay has started her summer job and last week we dodged rain storms each afternoon, trying to get the pipes moved before another downpour. She is mowing as in other years but has also taken on moving pipe. It has been quite a challenge since she has to go around or over headstones, trees, and ornaments on the upper cemetery. I've been helping her a little until she learns how to do it. Today she is taking a break since it has been so cold and blustery and wet. It's always a challenge to find time during May to fit in working but that's how it goes if we want to have the job come June.

[Dad] I can't think of a lot to add to Sue's report of our week's activities. We were able to get one strong evening and most of Saturday afternoon spent on the yard. With all the rain we have had, the grass looks wonderful and is covering the mouse trails left when the snow melted. I pruned two of the three apple trees and mowed again. The wider swath of Steve's mower sure cuts down the mowing time.

Last night for FHE we went to the senior recital of Ann Marie Whyte. She played several piano pieces, including a composition of her own, sang several numbers and had the Chambers join her on a couple of numbers. It was a wonderful program. SaraKay said she is already starting to work toward her senior recital--I can't believe it--what dedication and foresight.

This morning I woke up at 3:30 and couldn't go back to sleep, so I got up and started my exercise routine an hour early. I am starting to feel the effects and am about ready to go down for a nap already. The last couple of Sundays we were pretty free and I couldn't believe how much time I had available for scripture study.

Last Saturday morning was the Blackfoot District Cub Scout Lewis & Clark Field Day. The weather was cold, overcast, and intermittent rain showers, but we had a great time. I figured there were close to 290 people there--so it was a great success. The kids really enjoyed the Lewis & Clark trading cards and that was a great mixer. One of the highlights was the candy cannon; everyone had a chance to get a fistful of candy after it was shot from the cannon--a gallon at a time.

We are trying to think out a ward mission plan. We created a form for keeping track of contacts with each family, plan to make some visits and help meet some needs of less active and non-member families, met with President & Sister Jenks to get some of the materials and records they had, and are going to meet with the full-time missionaries today to find out what is going on from their standpoint and what we can do to help them.

May 18, 2005

[Mom] The last couple of weeks, Daddy and I have been compiling information on all the members of our ward, assessing the needs, and trying to continue with the contacts the Jenks' had in their pool of contacts. We have been using a ward map that the Jenks put together following our ward boundary changes. We already knew where some of the new members lived, but most of the members in the subdivision we have no idea, and so we are following the map until we get acquainted.

Just to give you an idea of the numbers we are dealing with: there are presently 47 families that have all or part of them "less active." These of course range from people who haven't been in the church building for 40 years to those who have just recently dropped out of sight for whatever reason. The second category is the families who are "non-members." There are 45 families in our ward boundaries in this situation! And this is the heart of Zion! It goes without saying that we are a bit overwhelmed with it all! Fortunately, we have another couple, Ferrell and Tami Wray who are serving as ward missionaries too, and we have asked for another couple, preferably one with a Spanish speaking skill.

I have been compiling lists as well as typing up reports of those visited in May and compiling questions that I have come across as I have gone over ward lists such as, "Is so and so ordained or has he been overlooked?" "Where are the membership records for so and so?" And other such information that is incorrect or incomplete. Daddy took 45 minutes in the last PEC meeting going over our findings and reporting our progress.

Last night we did our first evening of tracting. We had six families that we committed to visit. Two of the six weren't home but we dropped in on several others and had a very fruitful evening. We came home with a sweet spirit of confirmation that the unplanned visits were fortuitous, as Daddy would say. One of the families has been going through a traumatic medical problem and we were grateful to have a chance to offer some empathy and friendship.

Now for some family news: Mike and Marci put aside their student personas on Monday and were outfitted and made up to star in the Joseph Smith movie that is presently being filmed in Nauvoo. They were overjoyed to get to participate in this and called me mid-day on another cast member's cell phone minutes to report that they were having a great time!

Tim called yesterday and said that he has been pretty bummed out about his computer. Apparently, the fan quit and the motor fried his computer. He has to send it away and it won't be completed for several weeks. All this when he is already struggling to complete enough of his summer term classes to be able to leave two weeks early for his internship. He was not sure how it was all going to work out.

Laurel reported on chat that they may be moving to a lovely new home in Chongqing this weekend. They have found a couple willing to rent it to them on a two-year contract and John's boss wants the Hilton apartment so Ford is willing to work with them. The home is five minutes from the international school and 10 minutes from John's work. They are pretty excited to have a yard, patio, and a nearby park.

FYI: Keep in mind for our July reunion that on Wednesday, July 27th Cole will be sealed to Chet and Becky in the I.F. temple. The receptionist said that the family needs to be in the temple at 1:30 and the guests arrive at 2:00 with the sealing at 2:30. The cabin in Island Park has been reserved for that night as well as our home being available for people to stay for Wednesday evening. I think Daddy will go to the cabin with Steph and Linds after the sealing and I will come home and go up the next morning. I had a long visit with Sandi and so we have a lot of options.

[Dad] Last Saturday was a Cedar Badge Staff meeting and ended up being a great meeting. It took me most of a day to follow up on the mailing that we put together, sorting, counting, and getting it ready for the post office. Friday night and Saturday was the Blackfoot District Lewis and Clark Spring Camporee. Aaron Moon has done a wonderful job of organizing and staffing this type of event. We had Buffalo stew, buffalo jerky, wild turkey--smoked and cooked over a spit on-site, smoked salmon, and a type of beans. Scouts were supposed to bring their own dishes and utensils--not paper or plastic and it was really a good feel for what Lewis & Clark may have eaten. We also had a campfire program with an Order of the Arrow callout that was very effective. The next day was full of games and competitions.

Sunday was full of meetings beginning with correlation with the full-time missionaries at 6:30, PEC at 8:30, correlation and ward missionary

meeting with Farrell & Tami Wray at 10:00, and then into our regular block of meetings. After all was said and done, I felt that my Sunday and also last week were plenty busy with the demands of our new job. I feel good about the progress we are making in getting organized on who and what we are doing. It is also nice to have the opportunity to work together–Sue always makes me look good!

I have worn my Darth Maul tie today, but no one has commented on it. We are going to the Continuous Reading Fireside tonight; maybe someone there will notice. Doug Andrus (of trucking fame) is the speaker and I think his daughters are singing a couple numbers--the Andrus Sisters have been pretty famous in the past and even did several recordings. It should be a great event and hopefully a means of encouraging more kids to read the scriptures. I am proud of each of you and the heritage of continuous reading and 1333 readers that SaraKay can look to and follow.

May 24, 2005

[Mom] It's a beautiful sunny day outside, such a contrast to the cold, wet weather we have been experiencing for several weeks. The truly wonderful thing is that having all the wet weather has helped immensely to add to the water supply and alleviate some of the concern for the upcoming season.

Last night for home evening we went with SaraKay to move pipe at the cemetery. Fortunately, the rains the last few weeks have kept things irrigated and we haven't had to worry about it until now. School will be over on Thursday although Driver's Ed is in full swing and SaraKay is back and forth with that for the next month. It will be a relief to have her able to drive. We aren't sure just what we will do for another car, but we have several months to worry about that so I guess we'll procrastinate until we are forced to make a decision.

I received a call from Andrea yesterday. She has been struggling with migraines for several weeks and they seem to be intensifying since McKay arrived. She is under a doctor's care and trying the natural herbal regimen, eating right, sleeping right, and doing her best to ward them off, but nothing seems to be working very well. She is also going daily to a chiropractor and making sure that it isn't her alignment that is causing the problem. When I called them this morning, David said that Laurel had one last night and that they were up helping her get through that. As one who has had my share of headaches (small ones comparatively), I know how debilitating they can be. Remember them in your prayers.

We are grateful that the Larsen's of Nashville seem to be adjusting. Although, on chat, Steve mentioned that he is assigned to visit a member who is totally inactive and is a drug kingpin who abuses his family. Now that sounds like a challenge! Hopefully the ward also has some wonderful, devoted members. We were pleased to hear that they are driving to spend Memorial weekend with Bonnie's sister, Julie.

When I visited with Becky last week, she commented on some sticky situations that she and Chet are in because of his work as the ward mission leader. One of their golden contacts just found out that her member boyfriend has a rather colorful past and so bringing the investigator closer to baptism has suddenly become more complicated.

We so appreciate the letters and pictures sent. It connects us in a way that just wouldn't be possible otherwise. Laurel mentioned on chat that after John had visited a Ford facility in another city that the people he worked with called his boss and said, "We want that John Larsen guy to come work here!" John's boss refused and they struck a compromise that John would spend two days a week at the new plant until they had things up and running. This week they will move from the hotel and get into a situation that is more conducive to a young family.

[Dad] Maybe some of you remember Leon Hale--we found out over the weekend that he had died on Friday, fairly suddenly. He had been suffering from cancer for a couple of months. He was only 72. That is sounding younger every day!

We visited at the home of his son Eric last night and at the viewing tonight. It seemed strange to see all those kids that were growing up in the ward when I was bishop and they are so old with grown families now. We are enjoying our missionary work and the sweet visits we are having with people. I think there are a lot of people that would be active in the Church if there was just more love extended to them.

Last Saturday, the ward did a major cleanup for the McDermott (Ken) family and also did a major project of yard work for a Spanish family whose mother had just had major surgery. Then we had a clean-up of the ward and a ward picnic at the

shelter. It is always fun to be able to work together and feel the unity of common service.

Yesterday I felt impressed to go visit the Pastor of the local Baptist Church and talk to him about Scouting. Based on what he told me about his youth program, I felt there was a need for a Cub Scout Pack and a Venture Crew and made a return appointment for today to share with him how those programs could enhance his youth ministry. He grew up in Chicago and doesn't know much about Scouting, but we were able to pique his interest and it looks like a strong possibility that we will be able to get a couple new units sponsored by the Baptist Church.

Work has been interesting as I have been ordering so many things for the Cedar Badge staff and participants--T-shirts with different colors for staff and participants and guessing the quantities and sizes; Belt buckles for the staff, leather belts with "Cedar Badge" on for the staff; jackets for the staff with different colors for each program--Scout, Varsity, and Venturing; neckerchiefs; red berets for the staff; and patches, and so on and so on. What a job!

With being released I am able to get back to the orchestra. We are playing at graduation for the entrance and exit of the graduates and a special number. It is rewarding to be able to do that again. We are getting excited about going to Mike's graduation, but a little frustrated at the traveling we have to do in a short amount of time because of Driver's Ed.

June 1, 2005

[Mom] Last Thursday I drove to Logan where I met Kathy and Dick who brought Grandma Ilene to Logan en route to their Paris home for the holiday weekend. We arranged to meet at 6:15 and I pulled in just minutes behind them. We transferred Mom into my car and we headed home, arriving before SaraKay and Daddy got home from playing in the community orchestra for Snake River graduation ceremonies.

On Friday and Saturday Mom and Wright visited several graves and decorated them, went to dinner, and enjoyed the chance to be together. Friday night we watched "The Work and the Glory" with Mom since she had never seen it. It was just as good the second time around for the rest of us.

Saturday we went to the new Star Wars movie while Mom and Wright visited some family graves in Tetonia. I remembered in the opening scene of the movie why I haven't been much of a Star Wars fan: I get car sickness! All the fast-moving vehicles darting here and there and everywhere! Also, the sound was so loud I felt like I was being blasted into space! Aside from that, I guess it was fun to finally fit in the last piece of the Star Wars puzzle.

Saturday night we hosted the new Sister missionaries to a backyard barbeque before I went team teaching with them. Normally when we have Elders in the stake, Daddy would do the team teaching but now with the Sisters, I am the one to draw the duty, a sweet experience.

Sunday Daddy and I presented the fifth Sunday RS/Priesthood combined meeting and spoke on the Holy Ghost. With the hectic week we had had, it was quite a challenge to find time to prepare, but it went well.

Monday morning I called and visited with Laurel. She described their unbelievable weekend trying to get their move made before John flew out Monday for the other city where he will work Tuesday through Friday for the next several weeks. Not only was the move traumatic, but the new home was so dirty and there was just an unbelievable amount of details to take care of. Laurel said she hopes she never has to experience anything like that again, although John told her that eventually they will probably move him to the other Ford plant permanently because it has so many problems and expats are needed so badly. The upside of it all is that there are five LDS families in that area and she wouldn't be so isolated.

The good news from Dave and Andrea is that her headaches have backed off and she has had a couple weeks of good health! Thanks to all for your faith in their behalf.

Monday we all drove to Logan and before meeting Kathy and Dick and sending Grandma on her way back home, we dropped in to see Steph and Linds and then took Grandma to see Shauntel and Randy and kids. After meeting Kathy and visiting for a while, she and Mom headed for home and we returned to Shauntel's for a delicious barbequed beef dinner with several unique and delicious salads. It was so fun to just sit and relax.

Unbeknownst to us, Randy had asked permission of the family that they are trying to buy a home from and we swung around and saw the home they're negotiating on. It sits in the foothills of

Smithfield almost adjacent to the golf course and has a wonderful view of the valley and a backyard that opens into a wooded area in a canyon. They are excited with the prospect of getting into their own home and it was fun for us to get to see where they might be moving to. Things are still up in the air with the paperwork, but we sure thought it was a beautiful home and one they would enjoy.

Yesterday and today have been pretty harried with moving pipe, driver's ed., Daddy's demands at work, and all the preparations to leave. We finally got a small token garden planted and the weeds sprayed. Daddy has worked so hard all weekend to get things in "shipshape" around here and it has been wonderful having his input!

We need to get this letter sent before we leave tomorrow for Iowa. Our original plan was to take a week-long leisurely trip to the Midwest but due to circumstances beyond our control, we were not able to leave until Thursday at noon, and we were going to have to be back by Tuesday, so it was turning into a real rush job.

Today Mike called and said that he had been on Travelocity and found some rates that included hotels that he thought would rival what we would spend on gas, food, and lodging by driving it. After an hour on the internet searching for flights, we decided to take his advice and we booked flights out of SLC on Thursday afternoon, returning on Sunday night. We have a short layover in Chicago and then continue on to Cedar Rapids, arriving there about 11:00 on Thursday night.

Ever since we decided to fly Daddy has felt a huge relief. He always bears the brunt of the driving and stress when we go anywhere, so I know that this will be a lot easier on him. Fortunately, we had already arranged to see Paul and Jenny in Iowa when they came for Mike's graduation instead of us making the trip to Wisconsin to visit them. Mike and Marci have a car we can use and so I think this new plan is going to work great for us.

By the way, Tim did arrive safely in Green Bay, although the apartment situation was so bad (drinking, smoking) that he spent the night in a hotel and met the next day with the personnel director who listened to his concerns and decided to put him up in a beautiful new condo that is usually rented out to retirees. He has about 1600 sq. ft. of new living space all to himself! There is supposed to be another LDS fellow coming to do an internship for the summer and maybe they will work something out with him, too. Tim is excited about his job and thoroughly enjoyed his first day of work.

[Dad] With all our work cutting, pruning, trimming and spraying, things are looking pretty good around here. It has sure been hard to find time to do what we knew needed to be done. It was fun to have Mom Ilene here and for SaraKay to develop a relationship with her as she discovered her sense of humor and heard stories from her teen years and life since.

It is going to seem good to get away for a couple of days. It is a relief to think of just driving three hours instead of eighteen each way. I sure appreciate Mike doing the research and coming up with the idea.

June 7, 2005

[Dad] Last week was a whirlwind. With all the yard work, missionary work, getting ready for Cedar Badge, going to Iowa for Mike's graduation, and so on.

Mike and Marci were such gracious hosts and we had a delightful time with them. The graduation ceremony was the shortest ever: forty-five minutes. They knew what they were there for and didn't muddy the water with lots of long boring talks. We were delighted to be able to share the experience with Pete and Karen Belliston, Marci's parents, whom we had first met just five months ago at Mike's wedding. We went out to eat at the Outback in Coralville and had a great time.

The next day was a fun time at the McBride Raptor project and we observed a variety of raptors up close that had been injured and were not able to sustain themselves in the wild. The birds were beautiful and we were early enough that we were about the only ones there. We went to a beach area on Coralville Lake where we played frisbee golf, ate a picnic lunch, played in the water with a nice sandy beach, and visited.

Mike started his Boards on Sunday, so we didn't think we would see much of him, however we went to the ward with Marci and Mike slipped in and out. I gave him a blessing with Paul's help with regard to his Boards and decision of where to practice for the next couple of years. They are working things through with two primary choices--Wisconsin and Washington.

It added a lot to our visit to have Paul, Jenny, Beth and Ben join us for the weekend. We so enjoyed

the time we had with them and playing with Beth and Ben.

[Mom] I felt badly this morning when Daddy mentioned at breakfast that he couldn't sleep and got up in the middle of the night. That is so unlike him. I've always said that he never lets anything interfere with his sleep but I guess that shows the stress he is under right now with Cedar Badge on the horizon and all the details of preparing for that. Which reminds me, he is going to be leaving next Wednesday and will be gone for 10 days including Father's Day weekend, so please keep that in mind and maybe call or get him a greeting before he leaves. I'm not looking forward to having him gone. He is such a comfort and strength to SaraKay and me.

Our trip to Iowa was a first for SaraKay. She had never flown before and so we tried to make it a learning experience for her, helping her find her way from one gate to the next, etc. Of course, we thought of Katie and her upcoming trip to Korea. She will truly be a veteran flyer by the time she arrives home two weeks later.

On our trip home, as we approached Salt Lake, the plane ride was very bumpy. I tried not to act too alarmed but I had to stop reading my book because I was getting nauseated with all the pitching the plane was doing. When we finally landed, I looked at Daddy and he said, "In all my years of flying, I have never experienced anything like that!" I was glad he hadn't told me that earlier!

On our drive home from Salt Lake we drove through severe thunderstorms and pelting rain all the way to Pocatello. We kept thinking we would drive out of it but it was very widespread and in many places the freeway had large puddles that made driving difficult. We have had an amazing amount of rain this past month and the area between Pocatello and Tremonton is as green and pretty as I have ever seen it!

I called and visited with Laurel this morning. She was struggling with the situation she has with John absent for much of the week. It is nearly impossible to communicate without his help and many times she is hamstrung until she can reach him in Nanjing and have him interpret for her.

She told of an experience that day of leaving Eliza with their nanny and having her driver take her to the Pilates class that she teaches. Part way through the class John called from Nanjing. The nanny needed to get a message to Laurel that Eliza was sick so she had called John at work and John called Laurel and then Laurel couldn't locate her driver. When she finally arrived home the nanny and another person were looking at all the medications in the cabinet trying to decide which to give Eliza since they couldn't read the labels! Fortunately, Laurel arrived before something crazy happened and took Eliza to the doctor. It's things like that that about do a mother under, and I could tell she had had a frustrating day. John's work is equally difficult right now and he is putting in long hours and is under tremendous stress. Our prayers continue with them.

As Daddy said, our time in Iowa was wonderful. It was fun to see Mike and Marci's cute apartment and to sense the contentment in their marriage. They will both be grateful to have today's exams over and know that he is nearly ready for employment. At this point it looks like they may be going to Washington state. They promised to keep us posted as soon as the decision is made. Although graduation was short, we were so proud of Mike and his accomplishment! It was fun to get to meet some of his professors, church leaders, and even one patient who attended graduation to wish Mike well in the coming years.

It was an added bonus to have Paul and Jenny and fam there for the weekend. On Saturday we thoroughly enjoyed our time in the hills and by the lake. I never grow tired of the beautiful Iowa countryside! After doing some touring and playing disc golf, we all laid under the shade of a big tree and visited while Ben and Beth slept in the car. There was enough of a breeze that it was just right temperature-wise and it felt good to be together, unrushed and relaxed. Marci fed us some wonderful meals!

Steph just called and bemoaned that her garden was doing great and today they got 2 inches of snow! She thinks that most of her plants will be goners after being covered with snow. They haven't been able to lay sod because it has been so muddy and that has delayed that process, too.

June 14, 2005

[Mom] I want to get this written so Daddy can contribute before he leaves tomorrow morning for Cedar Badge. He has a Wednesday-Sunday training for staff and then the boys come in on Monday to start their week of training. The last

few weeks have been pretty crazy with all the preparations for the event.

Our weekend in Boise was short but very enjoyable. We left Saturday morning and arrived about noon in Boise. Andrea's mom and three Cottom cousins had been there all week attending a music camp at BSU which they thoroughly enjoyed. Saturday we attended a private recital where Anna Sue, Laurel, SaraKay, Chantelle, Adrene, Catherine, and Rebecca all performed piano or vocal numbers. It was so fun to share that experience with them. Another performer was a little boy that Laurel teaches piano.

Following this we went swimming in their neighborhood pool. It is just a short walk from their house and opened to residents and their guests. Our group was almost all that there was in the pool so that made for a very enjoyable private swimming party. Later we were going to play tennis but the courts were occupied so we just had supper and the kids had a movie party while we went on a walk through the neighborhood. We enjoyed the chance to renew acquaintances with Andrea's mom, Laurel, and to get better acquainted with McKay Stephen.

On Sunday several of Dave and Andrea's friends attended sacrament meeting with them for the blessing of McKay Stephen. Dave mentioned in the blessing that McKay had been named after three very special men: McKay after a latter-day prophet and Stephen after his grandfather and also after his father's twin brother, Stephen. It was an emotional moment for all of us as David blessed little McKay that he would follow in the footsteps of these three righteous examples.

Following the meeting the guests came to the house for a delicious brisket dinner. The group was still going strong when we left for home about 4:00. Dave and Andrea are great hosts and are always trying to involve the non-members in their special occasions. It was obvious that they are loved and respected in their ward and neighborhood.

Andrea has been doing better with her headaches and is hoping that as McKay gets a little older she will be able to orchestrate her life so that she paces herself. That is almost an impossible task when you are a young mother with a newborn.

Our missionary work has been pretty intense. With Daddy gone I'm sure it will slow down a bit since I'm not supposed to visit most homes alone. We are excited for some of the things that are happening and continue to pray that the people we visit will feel a desire to make the gospel a part of their lives. One of the unexpected pleasures of this missionary assignment is that many of the families we are working with will make comments when we introduce ourselves such as, "Oh, I know you. I went to school with your twins, Steve and David." Or, "I was friends with John," or "Aren't you Stephani's folks?" And then they tell us something good about you kids and that makes us feel happy. Anyway, we are meeting lots of new people and trying to form some bonds that will help these families come back.

This morning when I opened my email there was a notice about flight info on Southwest. I couldn't figure out where Daddy was going so I read further and realized that it was info on Steve and Bonnie coming for the reunion! I immediately tried to call them to confirm what I thought I was reading but they weren't home. Now to recruit Tim and Jonie! It sounds like Tim's schedule is a little freer than he originally thought it would be so maybe it would be a possibility. He is going to be hosting Paul and Jenny this next weekend. Sounds like fun!

[Dad] Knowing I would be inaccessible on Father's Day I appreciate the sentiments and calls I have already received. Last night we celebrated with a big dinner for the three of us--even setting the table instead of eating at the bar--wow!!! I am looking forward to Cedar Badge and hope it is as positive an experience as I anticipate and that I will be able to do everything expected of me.

For FHE we watched "Saints & Soldiers" and enjoyed it after getting the yard work done for one more time before I leave. With all the rain we have had the last couple of weeks I couldn't believe how dry things got! The horses don't seem to bother the Ausi trees and so I took down the fence and rolled it up that was protecting them. I also trimmed a bunch of branches that were reaching across the fence and over into the yard. We still get some "willow residue" when the wind blows hard, but we have sure enjoyed having the shade and the wind protection.

We did more driving this last weekend to get to Boise and back than we did the previous weekend to Iowa to Mike's graduation. But we had a great time and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. The swimming pool that Sue mentioned was a lot of fun and I enjoyed wrestling with the kids and

having them climb up and jump off of me and try to dunk me.

On our missionary work, we've worked in quite a few contacts and the Bishop is really pleased with the progress we are making on several fronts. We have another couple to help us--Randy & Pam Cox.

Things are progressing with Dad's estate settlement. The attorney sent out a vague letter that most of us didn't realize needed a reply, but hopefully we have gotten that taken care of and will be back on track. As I think about my parents I realize how much of their influence and teachings still permeates my life and is also reflected in you kids and your love of music, your work ethic, your dedication to your families, your commitment to the Church, your giving service where you are called, and your giving natures to worthy causes--just to mention a few. I helped SaraKay move pipe at the cemetary and thought about Mom's last days and her selection of her final resting place as I moved the pipes over her and Dad's headstone.

June 19, 2005

[Mom] It's a beautiful sunny day and the prospect of attending our meetings fills me with joy. Like SaraKay said on our way home from Boise last Sunday afternoon, "I've missed our ward!" I have too, although it was such a pleasure to participate in Mike and Marci and Dave and Andrea's meetings these last few weeks. The only downside is that Daddy is far away attending meetings in Driggs and so we aren't doing much celebrating of Father's Day today. It hit me the other day that now neither Daddy or I have an earthly father to visit or extend greetings to and so this is the beginning of a new era in that respect for us. Of course, I can always imagine those two great patriarchs running around in heaven, fulfilling assignments and doing their part on that side of the veil to "bring souls to Christ." That's a cheery thought!

Our week has been pretty busy but once we got Daddy out the door, it settled a little. He was so uptight about having every detail accounted for with this Cedar Badge course that he had thought of little else. He has a wonderful volunteer staff who have carried so much of the load, but he still feels like "the buck stops" with him as the staff advisor and he didn't want to overlook anything. Once he arrived at camp, he was pleased to discover that last year one of the equipment sheds was made into a director's cabin and so he has his own little spot to sleep, wash up and shower. He doesn't have a toilet but he said that he would rather have private shower facilities than a private toilet so he feels like he is well taken care of. I'm hoping that now he can settle in and enjoy the experience.

As for us here at home, our first crisis came when we were preparing to mow and couldn't get the mower started. SaraKay was so determined that she started mowing with the hand mower and so I tried to reach son Steve (who we bought the mower from) or Daddy for some tips on starting it and neither of them answered their phone. I then went out and sat on the mower and began tinkering and finally got it to go. SaraKay and I have such short legs that to push on the clutch before turning on the key was not possible and when I realized that I wasn't compressing the clutch far enough, I sat on the edge of the seat and pushed with all my might and it started right up. Daddy is always saying that being tall has its disadvantages (such as being sandwiched in on a plane ride), but being short occasionally poses problems, too. When SaraKay saw me come driving out onto the grass, her grin nearly matched my own. We also got the irrigating done, weeded the garden, and spruced up the flower bed. It felt good!

We received word that Mike has signed a contract with the clinic in Washington state and they will be leaving Iowa this Wednesday for good. I'm sure it fills Mike with some melancholy to see that chapter of his life come to a close but he and Marci are looking forward to an adventure in their new location. They will be visiting family and using part of this next month to go to Washington to line up housing and get things ready there.

June 28, 2005

[Mom] Daddy said that there were so few on Chat Sunday that he didn't get much news of the family. We recounted what we knew of people's comings and goings and realized that several of you weren't home to participate. Paul and Jenny went to Wisconsin to spend the weekend with Tim, Mike and Marci were with her parents in Bountiful, I was in Logan with Shauntel and Randy, Laurel is in Cincinnati with her parents, John is in London for 10 days, Becky and Chet were picking Katie up at the airport, and so that about decimates chat. The good news is that everyone arrived at their destinations safely and no one was lost in an airport. I'm sure Katie will

have some tales to tell when she arrives home from Korea.

Partway through last week as SaraKay and I were kneeling for family prayer, she commented, "Hasn't this been the longest week of our lives without Daddy here!" I had to agree that the time dragged by without him around to spice things up. He had a wonderful experience at Cedar Badge and came home grateful for the Lord's watch care over the group. I know he has some sweet stories to share with the family and so I'll put off sending this until he writes. He was worn out by the time he arrived home Saturday night. Fortunately, we had Sam and Josh here (while Steph and Linds attended her 20th year class reunion) and they were good sports about helping to unload the van.

It was the first time ever that Steph has been able to attend her class reunion and I knew they must be having a great time when they didn't get home until 10:15 from a 6:00-8:30 event! I would have loved to have just talked and talked with her about all the kids she saw but they needed to get on the way home, so we've delayed that conversation for later.

Sunday afternoon I drove to Logan and spent the evening with Shauntel and Randy. They are moved into their new home and getting things settled. It is a beautiful home with lots of wonderful features. Camille has been so sick and listless the last two weeks that they took her in to get some blood tests done to see if she was dealing with something more serious than the flu. It was a relief when we awoke Monday morning and she seemed to be a little livelier. Hopefully she will soon be on the mend. Of course, Archie could afford to be a little less lively! He is certainly a busy boy and loaded with personality and anxious to see and do everything that everyone else is doing.

On Monday morning we met Steph, Sam, and Josh at the rental and we worked the morning finishing up most of the cleaning and packing. It was fun for me to get to work alongside my grandkids and especially for me to get a chance to talk to Sam about his trek experiences. He spoke in sacrament meeting on Sunday about his experiences and I could tell from what he shared with me that the Trek had been successful in turning his heart to his forefathers and in strengthening his testimony.

By about 2:00 we finished up and returned to Smithfield to have lunch before I left for home. Shauntel really appreciated the help. It's been just a little over a year since they moved from St. Louis and she commented that she hopes they don't have to face another move for a long time.

Before I left Logan, I dropped by Steph's home and saw their yard. Last week they had sod laid and it certainly looks wonderful! They were just headed to Wal-Mart to buy some plants to put in their berms and along the front path. I don't know what was more exciting; Shauntel's house or Stephani's yard! Anyway, we are grateful that things in Logan are going well.

We are in the final throes of SaraKay's driver's ed course. She is at class today with a drive this afternoon. She has her last class and final on Friday. This week is going to be harried for her with YW tonight, EFY in Pocatello for the evening tomorrow, surprise Celestial Challenge reward all day Thursday, and rehearsals for Youth Fest besides. Hopefully the weekend will allow us some breathing space.

We hope that each of you have a fun Fourth of July holiday and stay safe. Mike and Marci flew out yesterday to find housing in Washington. Hopefully Tim has found a support group and he'll have something fun to do for the weekend.

[Dad] I have been worn out from Cedar Badge and took a good nap to catch up this afternoon. Yesterday, I went for my morning bike ride and had a tire blow and ended up walking home from Bingham Co-op pushing a bike, which didn't help me recuperate from all the long hours and hiking of the previous week.

Cedar Badge is an incredible program! The countless, selfless hours given by youth staff and adult staff to deliver a quality training program for those who come is mind-boggling. One of the exceptional experiences I would like to share is as follows: A young staff member who is 15 years old, whose parents were both on staff, went to his dad on Monday night and reminded him that they hadn't had their usual family prayer before Cedar Badge. They went into the woods where they could kneel in private. The young man asked if he could say the prayer.

The Dad told me as his son began to pray, he was incredulous and wondered to himself–is this really my son? One of the things he prayed for was that the Lord would send down angels to watch over them throughout this week and protect them and the Cedar Badge participants and to help us with

our problems with the forest service. If it was possible to have those angels be some of the 2,000 stripling warriors. Now that is really getting specific--using his Aaronic priesthood keys to the ministering of angels and then to request the angels he wants!

On Wednesday night, we had a group of boys that were crossing a two-log bridge over a raging stream full of runoff waters. It had been raining and the logs were slick. One of the boys slipped and like dominoes, four of them ended up in the stream. A youth staff member jumped right in and started pushing kids to the side where they could be pulled out and got the last one out just feet before the stream dumped into the river at the edge of camp. He said he didn't know how he was able to do that, but I know he had help from some stripling warriors on assignment that night. When I saw the stream the following day, it was down a little because of the night slowing down the melting of snow feeding it, but I still was filled with awe that Preston dared jump in and that he got everyone to safety.

One of the biggest problems associated with Cedar Badge is graduation and the influx of vehicles as parents come to pick up their kids and to see the grand finale. The forest service notified us that we could not park anywhere but on designated parking or driving areas within the camp, which would seriously limit the number of cars we could allow at graduation. We ended up taking most of the staff vehicles (almost 100) down to the Driggs Stake Center and utilizing a few other turnouts and parking spaces along the way and renting 50 spaces from Reunion Flats campground and shuttling people back and forth. Apparently, all our efforts paid off and we got word from the ranger that everything was okay and they didn't have any issues.

It is really a herculean effort when you consider nearly 350 participants, staff of 110 youth and about 50 adults, all the food and support efforts, the equipment required--including audio-visual equipment and so on. I am glad to have made it through my first one and to have a better feel for what it takes and all the supplies and logistics and to have a conviction of the good that the program does for so many. The growth in the staff members because of what is required and expected of them is tremendous--they really are the cream of the cream.

July 3, 2005

[Dad] We received the distribution from Dad's estate and wrote out one of the biggest tithing checks of our lives. How grateful I am for Dad's industry and thrift and his generosity to his posterity. As much as I would like to--I know I will never be able to duplicate for my children what he has done for us. I think everything is pretty amicable with the rest of my siblings. There will still be some residual things to settle out over the years but the major hurdle is over.

We paid off our mortgage so that when I retire and we leave for the mission field we will be debt free. In addition, we came across a fixer-upper that we invested in and will be able to put some sweat equity into and then sell for a tidy profit. We are excited about the prospects with that "little" project. We have spent a little time working on it already and have made good time with cleaning out and solving some of the small repair issues. We still have a lot of cleaning and painting ahead of us and work on the yard to get it into shape. Hopefully we will be able to have it back on the market in August or September.

Tomorrow, we are going to help with the 4th of July parade in Idaho Falls. The Cedar Badge boys usually help with a vanguard of historical flags. Dane Watkins wants me to drive his '76 Travelall and recognize the "Tricentennial Commission" which is formed to prepare for the third centennial celebration of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

Yesterday, we went to Island Park and checked out the cabin for the reunion and mileage to all the events that are planned and had a wonderful day. We are really excited about the cabin and can really see our whole family in and around that cabin. We also did a little investigating into rubber rafts, life jackets, and other equipment. In addition, Mom probably won't admit it, but we bought her a trail bike and she hopes to be able to ride it around here, at the stake center, and maybe even at Island Park.

At work this week, membership has been the major thrust and even though I didn't make the growth goal for Blackfoot District, nor for my service area (which includes the six districts I supervise and Blackfoot), we were able to help the Council to reach the Chief Scout Executive's Winner Circle. Blackfoot and my service area helped to make up for the finance shortfall of some of the other districts and we qualified for the FOS recognition as well. This week, we are

holding the "Salmon River Challenge" as a part of our Lewis and Clark celebration for 2005 and so I will be at the Salmon River High Adventure Base all week

[Mom] I would like to elaborate on what he has told you about the estate. When we received the settlement, we could see that we would have enough to pay off our mortgage and some to spare. We have both been very concerned about using these next four years to beef up what we have through the Boy Scouts and so, soon after Grandpa's passing, we committed to each other that if there was a distribution, we would make that our first priority. What a blessing to have the money to own our home, finally after all these years!

As we prayed and talked and tried to be wise, we finally decided that the balance of the settlement should be put to work for us but just what was the best use or investment was the question. We finally decided to take on the buying of a small home in Blackfoot and to fix it up and sell it. We bought it for a reduced price and yet from the first time we walked through it we felt that it was well built and mainly needed some TLC and lots of cleaning. The man who owned it died and it went into a trust and we bought it from the trust. It is 1400 square feet, in a nice neighborhood, one level, and has a fireplace, two-car garage, fenced back yard, three-bedroom, two bath layout.

The reason it was so cheap is that the owner was an alcoholic and it was filthy. We have spent several hours already shoveling out the mess and we have a lot of time ahead getting it cleaned and ready to paint. We hired SaraKay to help us and that has given her more summer work, and now that driver's ed is over, she is happy to earn a little more than the pipe moving is bringing in.

Needless to say, this decision has complicated our lives somewhat, but the wonderful thing is that we can take it at our own pace and put it on the market when we have done all we can within our proposed budget. It was a big step for us to do this and our lives are already so busy, but looking down the road to August and school, I know that my time will open up a bit and I will be able to put in the needed time. With Daddy leaving tomorrow, SaraKay and I are going to be on our own for a few days again and we are scheduling going in to the house and working several afternoons, so if you call and don't get us, just leave a message and we'll return your call. We thought we would like to let each of you know what was going on with the settlement since it has been on our minds and in our conversation much of the last few months. Like Daddy said, Grandpa was generous and we hope that we can capitalize on this opportunity and set aside the funds we need when Dad retires in four years. (Wow, that just doesn't seem possible!)

One new development in our family that Laurel will probably address in her letter is that James has been undergoing extensive tests and the doctors are quite certain that he has celiac, a gluten intolerance disease, that plays havoc with the digestive system. Uncle Mark was diagnosed a couple years ago with it and has had to seriously alter his diet since finding out what was the matter.

Laurel has been in Ohio with her family and received the news just a few days ago. We hope to hear more from her soon. It may be interesting to note that my brother, Nate, has two children with the same disease and they were diagnosed just a short time ago. I have wondered on occasion if Grandma Barbara had it but was undiagnosed since she suffered for years with stomach problems and was always taking medicine for ulcers. Perhaps in our day she would have been diagnosed differently. Our prayers are with John and Laurel and James.

I will also mention that Camille was diagnosed with mono and has had to be very careful in her recovery that she doesn't have complications. I have tried to reach Shauntel the last couple of days to see how things are going for them with their new home and new ward and new friends and all, but we can't seem to catch up with them.

Today when we finished our fast, Daddy gave the prayer and it seemed like we had plenty of things in the family that we were fasting for including James, Camille, Mike and Marci to find adequate housing, and Tim who is so far away. And those are just a few of the things we are aware of in this big family.

July 11, 2005

[Mom] We've had a big day today but got a lot accomplished. Daddy was gone all last week to Salmon River High Adventure Base and arrived home Saturday afternoon. SaraKay went to an all-day Youth Fest for the five Blackfoot stakes and the American Falls Stake and had a wonderful experience. She was so tired when she got home that we couldn't convince her to let us take her to Rupes for a birthday milkshake. She said she just

wanted to go to bed. Now that is tired! Fortunately, we had celebrated when Mike and Marci were here during the week so although Saturday was her birthday, we were happy to have family here to help blow out the candles.

Mike and Marci arrived on Tuesday and left Friday about noon. One night Marci and I walked the Jensen's Grove greenbelt while Mike and SaraKay went to "War of the Worlds." It was the first time this summer that I have walked around the greenbelt; there was a slight breeze and it was very pleasant. Later we just sat in the shade of a tree and visited. Marci is such a pleasant person and a joy to be around.

One of my favorite parts of their visit was when Mike emerged from the storage room with his arms full of stuff for the garbage. He spent several hours going through old papers and other memorabilia and made the "hard decisions" about throwing stuff away. I know that the move to Okanogan will probably not be their last, so they are still going to store some things here, but it's nice to know that not too long and they will probably be in the market for their own home. That is exciting for them!

I appreciated their help with the yard. Mike oriented Marci on the riding mower and sent her on her way and he did all the trimming. He also substituted for me with pipe moving at the cemetery with SaraKay and then one morning the three of us all did it. It was fun to have him helping with things in Daddy's absence. Later in the week SaraKay commented that it wasn't as hard to have Dad gone when Mike and Marci were here and I had to agree.

As most of you are aware we have purchased a home in Blackfoot that we are fixing up to sell. Before buying it we looked it over to see just what would need to be done and decided that we could do the cleaning and painting, etc. and resell it this fall. Well, that decision has really kept us hopping! Just trying to find time to get in there has been the challenge. Today Daddy took the day off to help with some of the heavy work. I had ordered a giant dumpster to dispose of the carpets and other stuff from the house and we thought it would arrive this morning. We all went in and started cleaning at 8:00 a.m. and it finally arrived at 3:30! By then we were worn out but we stuck with it until we got it loaded. Thank goodness that is done and now we have the more manageable things left to do. I think Dad will be grateful to get back to his regular job tomorrow! He amazes me with his stamina and capacity! He has quite enjoyed fixing up the small repairs in the house and it is certainly wonderful to have him so handy!

This Thursday Daddy and SaraKay will be going to the Allan Larsen Family reunion. Aunt Karen has organized it and it will be held at Jim's parents' cabin in the canyon above Provo. Some of you remember when we went there a few years ago. It is a beautiful setting and wonderful spot. I wish that timing had been different, but this weekend was not one that I could be gone. Becky is coming in Friday from Korea and Shauntel will be arriving on Thursday for all the wedding festivities for Randy's brother's wedding.

[Dad] Yesterday's effort on our "project" just about did me in. We had pulled all the carpets and the rest of the junk left in the house and piled things in the garage until we really had a garage full. It was gratifying to get everything transferred to the dumpster and to clean out the garage and the old blankets and furniture in the back yard that the previous owner had left for his dogs. Cleaning this house out has reminded me of cleaning and fixing up the old labor house on the farm when we were first married. I just hope all our time and efforts pay off when we resell the home--I'm sure they will. We are constantly impressed with the quality of the construction and know we have a solid structure to deal with.

Last week was a fun one at Salmon River High Adventure Base. We had two special sessions of a "Salmon River Challenge" in conjunction with our Lewis & Clark celebration this year. We had completed the installation of a COPE course--with high COPE and a zip line amongst the trees. The low COPE elements were also based in the trees and were interesting challenges that required the teams and crews to work together, trust in each other, and utilize the talents and creativity of the group to satisfy the challenges before them. We also had installed a nine-hole disc golf course that was really popular.

The river is always popular with the rafting and kayaking. One of the favorite activities was the rappelling and climbing on the cliffs at the edge of camp. That is where I spent a lot of my time--belaying and assisting. In addition, I was responsible for the station where they built a fire with a bow and drill and flint and steel and earned their "broken match" award. Some of the other activities available were archery, black powder, knife and tomahawk throwing, box hockey,

horseshoes, a GPS activity, volleyball, a hike on part of the Lewis and Clark trail, and other games.

Each night half of the camp would have a campfire program and the other half would go on an "honor trail" and then we would switch the next night. The honor trail had ten stations that each group would rotate through dealing with different aspects of the Lewis and Clark expedition and the Corps of Discovery and then we concluded with a review of the Scout Oath and Law with tiki torches lit for each element as it was discussed.

All in all, the sessions were full (200 - 250, compared to 70-80 for a normal session at SRHAB) and everyone had a great time. There was an incredible amount of work and time given by volunteers to man all the stations (except the river, which the SRHAB staff took care of), prepare meals, and carry out all the activities and keep them running from 8:00 in the morning until 9:00 at night. It was gratifying to be a part of the whole experience.

On the Fourth of July we went to Idaho Falls for the parade. The Cedar Badge boys are a part of the honor guard bearing the historical flags and I was responsible to distribute and retrieve the flags. Then Sue, SaraKay and I drove Dane Watkins' refurbished '76 International Travel-all in the parade and that was kind of fun.

July 24, 2005

[Mom] Becky and kids arrived on July 15th after a nearly 18-hour flight. Thank goodness Katie made the trip from Korea with them and was able to help. I envisioned that once they arrived, we would have several days of sleepless nights like we did last year, but the transition from Korea time to Idaho time was smooth and for the most part, everyone got along fine.

It was so fun to be at the airport when they arrived and to have the four Seely children come running in the terminal, outstretched arms yelling, "Grandma, SaraKay!" (Or was it, "SaraKay, Grandma!") Anyway, they were a welcome sight and the excitement of that arrival seemed to permeate their entire visit. They jumped on the trampoline, played on the monkey bars, and were running here and there nonstop the entire time they were here, except for a few hours each day when they went to bed and fell into a sound sleep. Knowing Becky's situation in the high-rise apartment building, I figured the most fun thing for all of them was the freedom to go outside, unchaperoned, and run around the yard. We bought a kiddie pool and between that, swinging on the swings, and jumping on the trampoline, they had a ball.

Becky and I found time to go over MozartMath business items, sort through the mail that I have been stockpiling these last few weeks, and she took a day to shop for the clothes and other items that are so hard to shop for in Korea. They also spent a day in Idaho Falls visiting friends and ward members and went to the zoo. All in all, I think they had a great time and then packed up to go visit the Logan bunch and then on to Chet's family's home in West Jordan. Chet was arriving on Saturday the 23rd, and they had a long list of things they were going to do before leaving for the reunion.

[Dad] How much of our lives do we spend looking back vs. looking ahead? Looking back now and then should give us a good point of reference and memories to help fill and shape the plans of the future. The Allan F. Larsen family reunion is now a pleasant memory. It was a treat to have that time with my siblings and their families though it was a disappointment to not have any of my own children nor Sue able to be there. Staff was in the same boat, but I know we all appreciated him making the effort to be there. In fact, he flew in from Philadelphia where he had been helping Jimmy remodel an older home that he had just bought. Gary & Linda had just had all their family together the previous week for their family reunion and so none of their kids were able to make it. Karen had her whole family there, Rick had Aubrey and Jonathan missing. Mark had his whole family there except for Janette's husband, Josh, who was climbing Mt. Borah with his dad. Jeanie and Scott had Christian and Julianne.

The Vanfleet cabin was a beautiful location and the foliage and setting had matured from 12 years ago when we were there last. We were able to enjoy walks, swimming at the pool, a visit to Cascade Springs, and quite a few went tubing down Provo River. We also enjoyed excellent food with treats constantly available (not good for diabetics). We played some fun games and had plenty of time to just hang out and visit--it was a very relaxing time. We had a good family meeting and designated Mark as in charge of the next reunion in 2007--so I wouldn't be surprised to see a visit to Colorado coming.

One of the highlights was the Sunday morning sacrament service we held before packing out and cleaning up. I got a call from Mike and Marci early that morning and they made the trip down from Bountiful just in time for our little meeting. Staff was conducting and he asked Mike to talk and he amplified on Elder Bednar's talk about tender mercies with some of the experiences they had had in finding a home in Okanogan. It was brief, but it meant a lot to me to be able to have Mike and Marci there to visit briefly with those of the family that were left. I asked Jessica if she had enjoyed the reunion and she replied, "Always." My sentiments as well.

This week has been a special time with Becky and her kids. What special spirits they have and yet I can see what challenges are there each and every day at this stage. We are so looking forward to the time we will have together. Thanks to Sue to work all the logistics to make this happen. We went to Sam's Club yesterday and filled the back of our van.

Today has been a special day as we celebrated Pioneer Day with an outdoor meeting at Nolan Furniss's home. There was a little dressing up in pioneer dress and we felt a great feeling of gratitude for the pioneers and all they suffered to settle this area. SaraKay played her violin while a group of her friends sang a medley of hymns--it turned out really well.

August 2, 2005

[Mom] The house is relatively quiet today, with the last of our company leaving Monday. When we arrived home from the reunion on Saturday, we started doing laundry and we were still at it at 11:00 that night. With Mike and Marci leaving for Okanogan on Sunday, Tim flying out Sunday afternoon, and John and Laurel and Paul and Jenny leaving at eight Monday morning, we knew that we had to get laundry done and things ready to go. While we kept the washing machine going strong, the rest of us unpacked the trailer, returned the life jackets and rubber rafts, and visited in the backyard while the kids jumped on the trampoline and enjoyed the kiddie pool. Although a game of "Scum" was planned for that night, I think everyone was so weary that the plans fizzled and we all went to bed.

It was fun to have John, Mike, Paul and Tim and families attend our Sunday meetings. They commented how different the composition of our ward was and missed the chance to see some of the old regulars.

Soon after our meetings Dad took Tim to the I.F. airport and Mike and Marci finished loading their cars for the trip to Washington. It was painful to see how packed they were, hardly having enough room in each vehicle for a driver. Fortunately, they have walkie talkies that will enable them to keep in touch as they drive. (Mike called this morning and mentioned that they were in Tri-Cities and attending a temple session before continuing on. They had seen the Wall Street Journal article on John and Laurel and wondered if we had seen it yet.)

Monday morning the remaining families were just heading out the front door for Logan when Don and Lisa pulled into the yard. They had been with Grandma Ilene and Kathy in SLC for the weekend and were en route to Moscow to visit with Charles and Brenda and then on to visit Don's family in the Tri-Cities area. It was wonderful to get to see Skyler who has been home only four days from his mission and was still feeling a little disoriented. All the family came and we served breakfast and then visited in the backyard while Riley enjoyed the swing and Abby and Chauncey worked on their "visors."

It has been a long long time since Don and Lisa have visited and it really was enjoyable to catch up on their family news. Both Skyler and Whitney are enrolled at community colleges in Phoenix this fall and will be living in an apartment in Bricker's new home. We really appreciated them working us into their itinerary and taking the time to stop and visit. Their timely arrival enabled them to visit for a few minutes with John and Paul and families who they haven't seen for many years.

As far as we know, all family members arrived at their destinations safe and sound, although Tim had two delayed flights and arrived at Green Bay later than originally planned. He said that he still got to work and got his report ready for the noon deadline despite the cancelled flights. He has about another three weeks of work before returning to Provo for completion of his Masters. He has enjoyed his summer and feels like it has given him a pretty good feel for accounting in private industry.

It goes without saying that we appreciate each of you who attended the reunion. We have heard many comments on how fun it was and how rewarding to be together. When I returned the cabin key, Sandi asked how we had enjoyed the facilities and I was able to give her a glowing report of how much fun we had. I mentioned to

her that the arrangement of the main level being separated from the other two levels had enabled us to enjoy our late night visiting and still not disturb the ones who were sleeping. She asked if we had seen any wildlife and when I told her about the two bull moose, she was amazed since they haven't seen any moose in the meadow except a mother and her calf.

She also mentioned that her husband, Curtis, uses the second level TV room as his trophy room and has personally bagged every animal that was displayed on the walls. I told her that several of the grandchildren had asked about the mounted game on display and I had to explain it to them before they would go to sleep the first night we were there.

It seemed to me that we had such unity in our experience this reunion. I have wondered if it was because more of the grandchildren are getting older and it isn't quite so difficult to handle the numbers, or if it was because of our experiences in the temple on Wednesday participating in the sealing of J. Cole to the Seely's. Maybe it was because we all felt grateful to have been spared the loss of family in the tsunami or the arrival of three new family members to our ranks. Whatever the reason, it seemed like a bit of heaven from start to finish and we arrived home renewed and emotionally invigorated.

I would like to mention a few memories that I took away from our time together:

- Sitting in the temple sealing room as the Seely children came in for the ceremony dressed in their native Korean dress and watching them respond to seeing a room full of Larsen's and Seely's, teary-eyed.
- The thrill of having 10 of our children and their spouses and children together to take a family portrait against the backdrop of the pines; having the photographer comment on how impressed he was with the family and the sweet spirit pervading our group.
- Hiking in Harriman Park with the older grandchildren, visiting, having a picnic and watching the swans and ducks and lily pads.
- Floating from Big Springs to Mack's Inn in a river sometimes so shallow that we had to get out and push the boats off the gravel bars. Two rubber rafts full of a few adults and lots of little toddlers, floating the river, shivering, and singing to keep themselves warm and hopeful.
- A canoe full of too many adults and a blue cooler that distributed treats to the hungry "troops" and kept everyone's spirits up despite cold, rain, and a long float.
- A hot tub so full of little bodies trying to keep warm after the float trip that there was standing room only.
- Two beautiful black bull moose who captured the interest and amazement of the entire family on Friday morning.
- Crafts of decorated visors and pressed flowers that occupied the troops during time at the cabin.
- A tree house fort that captured the imagination of the grandkids and filled many happy hours.
- A late-night game of scum that rivaled any played in years past.
- A rousing volleyball game that included grandkids who are getting noticeably better at the game as the years pass.
- A late-night family gathering that included opportunities for the family to share thoughts on things they had learned or good things that had happened to them this past year.
- A touching tribute to "Mom" who will be turning 60 this year as well as a beautiful scrapbook presented with responses from grandkids, kids, and spouses.
- A busy Saturday morning where all family members worked together to pack up, clean up, and head for home.
- Teary good-byes and lots of hugs.

[Dad] I don't know what I can add to Sue's letter about the reunion and the choice experiences of last week. I guess I have never felt more blessed than participating with my family during this reunion and the snapshots of memories that Sue ended her letter with. I was so grateful for the harmony and peace that prevailed and the combined efforts of everyone to get along, help with each other's children, pull together with meal preparation and cleanup, and all the other tasks that needed to be done.

We couldn't have done it without the loan of rafts, trailer, life jackets, etc. from neighbors; being able to get the four canoes from Scout Camp, and so on. I was especially touched with the discussion centered on words that described "Mom" or "Grandma" and why. Really some superlative descriptors without any duplication!

Well, I think I will send this and get to bed. It is darker at 5:00 am and takes longer to get light

with each passing day. We are so grateful for our shade in the back and cool nights to be able to pull down the temperature a little.

August 7, 2005

[Mom] I have a few minutes tonight before bedtime and thought I would get this started. Tomorrow Daddy leaves for a week to substitute at Treasure Mountain Scout Camp as director while the director takes on another assignment. Normally this kind of job isn't too tough but with it being the last week of camp, Daddy is anticipating that it may be a little more challenging to keep the staff focused and on-task. SaraKay and I are dreading having him gone but SaraKay leaves early Tuesday morning for Girls Camp and so I'm going to be the lonely one. This week of camp is really the last hurrah before school starts.

It was sweet to participate in Chrissy's baptism in Wellsville on Saturday. SaraKay had a prior commitment and didn't go but we thoroughly enjoyed the chance to join Bonnie's family and the Logan Larsen's (I mean Anderson's and Bennion's) for the occasion. Chrissy looked so pretty in her beautiful white dress and she had lots of cousins, aunts and uncles, and grandparents as well as friends and former neighbors there cheering her on.

I can't say the experience wasn't without some nostalgia as we drove past the Wellsville School and looked up at the house that was Steve and Bonnie's home for five years. But, we can see that the kids are doing well and we're willing to "go with the flow" on having them so far away. They are staying with Bonnie's sister, Laurie, in Salt Lake and will fly out Tuesday morning. They are the last ones to leave of all the siblings and we hope that all goes well with their flight.

It has been great to know that everyone arrived safe and sound to their destinations. That is always a concern. We were especially grateful that Paul and Jenny avoided an untimely car repair and were able to get it taken care of on their own turf.

I'm ready for school to begin and to have a little more routine in my day. We have been so busy the last few weeks that we have pretty much not worked at the house in Blackfoot and so I'm hoping to get the cleaning finished up this week while I have reduced responsibilities here at home. When Daddy arrives home, he will be in the thick of Tiger Ear preparations so we sat down tonight and talked through our priorities for the house and how to proceed to get things done.

Last Tuesday the phone began ringing and we heard from several people who had read the Wall Street Journal and wanted us to know. We got a copy and enjoyed reading through the article about John and Laurel and their experiences. I thought it was pretty amazing that they would be featured on the front page. There is always a bit of uncertainty when a reporter interviews you and then writes about it. I remember how unnerving it was to be interviewed when I ran for school board and various other times when a reporter would be present at school board meetings and I worried that something I said would be interpreted wrong. I remember Grandma Barbara used to get so frustrated with the newspaper and the way the reporters would twist what Grandpa said to suit their own agendas. One time Grandma said, "Happiness is waking up in the morning and finding you are NOT quoted in the newspaper!" I thought when Laurel told me about the reporter following her and the kids around for several days that it would be a challenge to be anything but what you really are and truly their time in China has been full of challenges and struggles.

We spent some time tonight visiting with our neighbor, Brent Young. He is leaving early tomorrow morning and checking into the SLC VA hospital for open heart surgery. He has had numerous heart attacks over the years and has finally reached a point where surgery is the only option open to him. It is very risky because of the condition of his heart and he and Shelli have been getting their affairs in order and all the daughters have flown home to be with him and Shelli through this experience. It is our third visit in the last couple of weeks and I really felt that they warmed up to us and appreciated our concern.

Another family that we are working with, the Mailhoits, have been having marital problems and we have helped Ruth move and set up a separate household until her husband commits to get some help for his drinking. It has been exhausting to make daily contact and help her find a job, get groceries, move furniture, etc. but I'm sure that this experience is very typical for normal missionary work. We are happy to be needed and to be making a difference.

P.S. It's Tuesday afternoon and I just returned from cleaning at our Blackfoot house. Not long after arriving I received a teary call from Becky who said that somehow Tate had fallen out of his

bunk bed and fractured his skull in four places. He has some hemorrhaging going on also so he is going to be in the hospital for several days under observation. As you can imagine, it is very frightening for them but he seems to be stabilized and doing okay. Becky will keep us posted.

August 16, 2005

[Mom] Several of you have asked regarding the reunion family pictures. Daddy and I will be meeting with the photographer this Friday and previewing the large family groups. Since it is impossible to really see them on the internet connection, we may just have to go ahead and choose a couple of the best and pick one for your family that is the best of you.

I received a phone call from Becky today saying that Tate is doing well enough that he may be able to start kindergarten this week. I suggested that she send him in a helmet since his healing is still not complete and Randy said that ideally Tate should keep pretty quiet for several more weeks, but he is eager to get going to school and every night when Maddie comes home, he grills her on everything that happened and everything that he is missing. Chet felt like sending him to school in a helmet isn't the answer so Becky is trying to come up with some other bright idea that will help him avoid rigorous contact for a few weeks. Hope she comes up with something that will solve the problem and still let Tate get into school.

This week has already been hectic with final preparations for school and Tiger Ear upon us in a couple weeks! I can't believe how time flies. It constantly reaffirms to me the importance of not procrastinating, especially when it comes to living the gospel. I imagine that all of you are busy getting ready for school and looking forward (as I am) to cooler temperatures and some Saturday BYU football. Tim called the other day and said that he will be finishing up in Green Bay next Thursday and heading our way en route to Provo the weekend of August 27th.

It's been nice this week to have both SaraKay and Daddy around. After my lonely time last week, I can empathize in a small way with Brenda Godfrey and the loneliness she must feel. When I visited with her Sunday she said that her kids try to be here for her on every special occasion such as Lyle's birthday, their wedding anniversary, her birthday, holidays, etc. but she said that at some point she has got to fly solo and she tries to convince them to not be so worried about her. I know they have been a wonderful support and comfort to her and it says a lot about their goodness and commitment.

Our neighbor, Brent Young, returned today from SLC where he had open heart surgery a week ago. We have kept close tabs on him and Daddy and Bruce Ellis mowed the lawn for him last night. It was a nice surprise for them when they arrived home and it looked so nice.

It's been raining all day and we couldn't move our lines, so tomorrow morning Daddy is going with us and we are going to move four lines before SaraKay has to go to Cross Country. We are on the last leg of this summer employment journey and we are SO GLAD!

Hope Dr. Larsen in Okanogan is enjoying his practice. Hope their furnishings have arrived so they have a place to sleep and eat.

[Dad] Last week at Treasure Mountain was a great week. I really enjoyed being there though I would have enjoyed it more if Sue and SK could have been there with me. I was able to have a goldilocks cabin all to myself--but of course, I didn't spend much time there. The camp staff was great and maintained a good attitude right up to the end. With a lot of hard work we finished closing things up by noon on Saturday and then they had time as a staff for a drawing for prizes that were donated. They had an opportunity to win based on goals during the year and extra tickets for being there at the end vs. those that had checked out early and I gave them each an extra three tickets as an incentive to finish by noon. So, they had a great time as a staff, we finished off a few final items with the lodge and trading post, and left by about 3:00. Most of the morning I spent walking around the camp and inspecting camp sites, picking up any bear boxes, campsite signs, and garbage that I could find. I felt good about the looks of the camp and all that we had gotten done. I hope that Dave, the camp director, is pleased as well.

We had ten big heavy patrol boxes, portable garages, carts, and a bunch of tents from the jamboree contingent of the council that we had to find a home for and store for Cedar Badge. It was a good week with lots of hard work and walking so I didn't gain any weight nor miss my bike.

August 22, 2005

[Mom] It's the first day of school today and I've been smiling all morning about surviving another summer! Of course, surviving the summer at my

stage of the game is certainly not as big an accomplishment as it was when I had a bunch underfoot, but nevertheless, it feels good to have school bells calling and Fall in the air. Hopefully all of you have returned from all your summer activities and are ready to tackle the regimen of school again.

Last week Daddy took a couple of vacation days and spent the time at our project house in Blackfoot. He is such a good fix-up man and so far, we haven't had to hire anything done. On Friday we painted the bedrooms and Daddy did the ceilings. We are learning a few tricks as we go along and it's been pleasant to work as a family to see the house take shape. Daddy and I also got in a temple trip and a visit to the photographers to order reunion pictures.

Our missionary efforts are bearing some fruit. On Sunday we had Ruth and Sheila Mailhoit come to our meetings and stay through Sunday School. Ruth seems to be receptive to what she is being taught and her daughter, Sheila, will follow her mother's lead. We also had one of the Astuhuaman children, Anita, come with us to church. I thought it took a lot of courage for her to come alone, but she did and I think she got along pretty well. Tonight the Mailhoits are coming at 8:30 for another discussion. They have been challenged for baptism so we'll see how it goes.

We were grateful to get the update on Tate's progress. We were also grateful that he made it through his first big day at school without too much distress.

Daddy is busy this week making sure that the Tiger Ear shifts are getting filled. His constant reminders to the district execs and their Tiger Ear chairmen are the key to having things run smoothly. It seems like he handles it with more ease than he did when he first started being in charge. It's hard to believe that he has done it for over 10 years now! Needless to say, the fair week isn't our favorite time of year! We are looking forward to having Tim here this weekend. He completes his internship on Thursday night and will spend Friday and Saturday traveling to arrive here that night. On Sunday afternoon he will drive to Provo and get himself moved in and settled for classes the next day. Not much of a break for him; he's anxious to get back to school and finish up.

[Dad] One of the fun things we had to do on our project last week was to replace the garage door opener. The old one was so old, that we couldn't locate anyone that had remotes with the right frequency. It took most of the day to remove and replace the Genie opener, rewiring for the safety eyes on the sides, adjusting to make it sensitive enough to not crush anything in its way, and to put on a truss to reinforce a cracked panel. It has been nice to get some painting done, put back light fixtures, finish off some of the plumbing repairs and so on. Hopefully this week is the week to get the windows and external doors all replaced and if Sue is able to spend some more time painting, we will be getting a lot closer.

We decided to pull out all the old appliances and I hauled them to the transfer station. I finished off the kitchen ceiling and we are ready to make some floor covering choices. It shouldn't be too much longer until we will be able to put the house on the market.

I have also been getting ready for the Tiger Ear booth and had to go to Little Lemhi to get a mixer that they borrowed and bring it back to be serviced and ready. It looks like we will be able to replace the only non-stainless-steel table with a donated table. The signups are coming and I have met with Sysco and ordered the rest of the ingredients and materials we need.

One other little project has been removing all the hardware and painting the back outside metal door to the scout office. I had some good coaching from Ruland Cardon, a friend from Cedar Badge that's a painting contractor. The door is a little pinker than I had envisioned, but really looks good to have the rust covered.

We have chosen to accept President Hinckley's challenge to read the Book of Mormon by the end of the year and we have been reading every day. I am a few days ahead but I want to finish by Joseph Smith's birthday as a present to him on his 200th birthday.

SaraKay is home from mowing and we are ready for FHE--a lesson on the internet and fighting pornography at the suggestion of our stake president, President Jenks at our Priesthood Leadership meeting last week.

August 29, 2005

[Mom] We have had an exciting weekend around here. On Friday the high school cross country team had a meet just for the Snake River kids and SaraKay ran in it and completed the course. Although she didn't come in at the front of the pack, she was consistent and kept with it to the bitter end. We're hoping that she can stay

accident free for the season and keep improving her time. It never ceases to amaze me that after only a week's worth of practicing the kids can go out and run three miles without a stop.

Friday after the cross-country meet, SaraKay and her friends all had "Seussical" tryouts. She had been working all summer on a song sung by Mayzie. She had listened to the soundtrack so much that she had almost all of the songs memorized but she focused on the one by Mayzie because that was the part she wanted. Most of the kids wanted to be Gertrude who plays opposite Horton the Elephant. When all was said and done, SaraKay got the part of Gertrude and her best friend, Kwani, got the part of Mayzie. The director had both of them at tryouts switch characters and eventually she cast them in the two top spots. When SaraKay got home from tryouts on Friday she was on top of the world with excitement over her performance and kept checking her email to see if the director had posted the results yet.

This morning she was up at 5:00 checking her email and there was a message but she couldn't get it to open. Before long the phone started to ring and she heard the news. It made for an exciting beginning to the day. There are two casts so that more kids have a chance to perform. The dates for the play (with OUR Star) are November 8, 9, and 10th.

Saturday afternoon Tim arrived from Wisconsin about 4:00 after three days of travel. Fortunately

he drove to Madison and spend Thursday night with Paul and Jenny before continuing on. He drove to Cheyenne by Friday night and spent the night in a motel that had busy train tracks just outside his window. He said that every hour a train went rumbling through and he felt trashed by the time the night was over.

The big accounting companies come on campus in September and there is an elaborate and time-consuming process that the students go through to get an interview and attend the company's orientation. Due to the time involved Tim doesn't want to sign up for too many companies but it’s tricky since he doesn't at this point know just what he wants and if he will get an offer. His choice of locations include Boise, Phoenix, and possibly Utah.

Becky called today and said that Tate had another MRI and received a clean bill of health. The doctor even gave permission for him to participate in P.E. class in school. He can shed the helmet and medications and that is a relief, too. We are certainly grateful that he had such a speedy recovery.

I called John for his birthday and he said that the kids are back in school and life is back to normal for them. They are enjoying their home and John enjoys his job. He also commented that James is a real trooper with eating just what he should and that they are beginning to see some progress with his digestive system. That is wonderful news.

Grandma Ilene called today and said that Lisa has been called to be the stake RS president in their new stake. She accompanied Skyer when he got released from his mission and later the stake president invited her and Don to visit with him. She thought it was something for Don and was totally bowled over when he called her to be president. She was given a list of women's names to consider for counselors and she didn't know any of them so she has really had to rely on the Spirit for inspiration as she has selected them. I'm sure she is feeling overwhelmed right now, but she will be a wonderful president and this will be a great opportunity for her.

This Saturday is the beginning of the fair. Daddy is going to break away Saturday afternoon so that he can go with us to Jeremy's reception in Logan. We will need to make a quick trip since he will need to be back for his Sunday morning replenishment of supplies at the fair booth.

This week we had new doors and windows put in the house and new locks installed, too. I'm hoping to get most of the painting finished up before the weekend. When the window contractor visited with us, he gave us some tips on things we could do to upgrade the home and although it all = work, we are going to take his advice. It's been slow going, but we continue to be encouraged with the progress we are making. I think Daddy is going to list it on the internet and try to sell it ourselves before we list it with a realtor.

[Dad] With working on the house every chance I get, it has been satisfying to see things taking shape. I installed a new sink in the master bathroom and finish painting all the ceilings. What a job! The ceilings have such a rough texture that it was really difficult to get good coverage in every dip, hole, and valley. The biggest things left are painting the woodwork, painting the doors–which are dark brown, painting the paneling in the addition, replacing the appliances, and carpeting. I would still like to get

some work done outside with the yard and sprinkler system also.

A couple times last week I drove into town at 5:00 a.m. and took my bike ride on the green belt around Jensen's grove and out to Rose pond--about 10 miles or so. With the change in the weather today I rode the stationary bike, walked on the treadmill, and did a bunch of exercises. I almost hate to get into that winter routine--I have enjoyed riding outside so much.

We have been responding to President Hinckley's challenge to read the Book of Mormon by the end of the year and have really been enjoying our reading and the friendly competition between Sue and I to keep ahead. We enjoyed the time with Tim and were pleased to be able to give him a priesthood blessing to start the year. He called last night and is pleased with his roommate, excited about his classes, and even saw some interesting girls at FHE. It would sure be a blessing if he could find his eternal companion before he leaves BYU. We know from Mike's experience how hard it is to find someone after you leave school. (But it certainly was worth the wait, the search, and all the blind dates to find a quality companion like Marci.)

Last night for FHE we had a joint get-together with Dick and Sue Thomas and the Mailhoits--our primary missionary effort of late. It was a sweet time and we continue to hope that Paul Mailhoit will begin to feel the spirit and desire to listen to the missionaries. Ruth and Sheila are reading and praying and attending Church and progressing with the discussions.

September 9, 2005

[Mom] Our weekend with the Larsen's was so enjoyable. On Saturday afternoon at four we left for Logan to attend Jeremy's wedding dinner and reception. His bride is from Jamaica but Scott's brother and sister in Logan offered to help them with a dinner so they were married in the Logan Temple and then that evening at 6:00 they hosted a wonderful dinner and musical program at a nearby church building. We arrived right at six and were so pleased to be joined by Shauntel, Randy and family and Stephani and Katie. Those attending on the Larsen's side of the family were Scott and Jeanie's family except for David who is on a mission, Mark, Rita and Jessica, Rick, Terry, Jacob and Tenessa, Aubry and Jonathon, Aunt Naida (Allan's sister), Karen, Teresa, Jacob and Josh. It was a truly enjoyable evening and we loved sharing in the festivities. So many of their special occasions are too far away to participate.

On Sunday Karen and family came for dinner. They were going to attend the fair on Labor Day and had asked if they could come for a visit. We cooked up Steph's famous chicken recipe and added a bunch of garden veggies and ate in the shade in the backyard. Karen had arranged with Gary and Linda to visit and spend the night after stopping here for dinner but before our visiting was over, Gary and Linda arrived and the bunch of us sat and had the best visit. It was so fun to get caught up on both families. I thought I would share some of the family news with you.

Gary and Linda: Garen's oldest daughter, Este, turned eight recently. Garen is in the process of buying out his father-in-law's dental practice in Alpine. They live in Lehi. Ryan finished up at Moscow this past spring and was offered a wonderful scholarship to attend Texas A&M to pursue his doctorate, but he became aware of a position with the Bank of Idaho in Ashton and opted to take that. He and McKenzie are remodeling a home they purchased in Ashton and it sounds like they are going through the same thing with their home that we are going through with our Blackfoot home. Gary and Linda have spent much of the summer with them helping them clean up and clear out but they are nearly done and are now getting settled.

At first McKenzie wanted Ryan to take the scholarship and continue with school but recently her father, Steve Jones, was diagnosed with a very aggressive form of cancer and has been at the Huntsman Cancer Institute for most of the last several weeks, so McKenzie has been grateful that they were close to home to help with the situation. Mindy and Roger are here in the Blackfoot area, Ashley and Emily are still in Salt Lake and Lisa and Jason in Albuquerque.

Jeanie and Scott: Miken and Lyman are in Sacramento. Lyman teaches 6th grade at a Charter school and they just had their third child. Julianne and Brad are in Sacramento but Brad is looking to make a change and they were going to stop in Boise en route home, spend the night with Dave and Andrea and do some looking in Boise. They have two children and are expecting in February. Maren and Brock are in Boston. He is working to finish up his doctorate and has a fellowship in San Diego. They have two children. Christian and Lacy moved to Kentucky three weeks ago and flew in for the

wedding. Christian is studying music and getting an advanced degree.

Jeremy and Marcha met while Jeremy was on his mission in Jamaica. He returned home and she served a mission and just a few months ago they made contact with each other. She was attending BYU Hawaii and he flew there to see her and the rest is history. Marcha is a very petite 4'11" and looks really tiny next to Jeremy who is close to six feet tall. Marcha is one of four daughters who have all married in the temple and she is full of energy. It was sweet for both of them that their mission president and his wife were with them in the temple and at the dinner that evening. David is in the mission field and Bethany is a sophomore in high school.

Rick and Terry: Jacob and Tenessa are both students at ISU. Aubry is starting her second year at ISU. Amanda is in New York working until second semester. I didn't get the details from Terry except that Terry said she has been very homesick and may decide to come home early. Jonathan is a sophomore in high school. Rick performed on the program accompanied on the piano by Aubry, and Jacob accompanied Jeremy on the guitar, who sang, "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" to his new bride.

Mark and Rita: Josh and Jeanette are the parents of a new baby girl born last week and so Mark and Rita have been helping them. They recently completed improvements on their Denver home and have put it up for sale. When it sells, they are planning to build in the Twin Falls area which is where Josh and Jeanette as well as JoEllen and her husband will probably reside following graduation since that is where he is from originally.

Karen and Jim: Teresa is in her sophomore year at USU and is thoroughly enjoying her college experience. She wants to spend a semester abroad next year and her studies have something to do with international communications. Jacob is a junior and is 6'3" tall. He is thinking about going into engineering when it comes time for college. He and Teresa are both 4.0 students. Josh is having a major growth spurt and is now as tall as Teresa and gaining on Jacob. He is 13 and has earned his Life rank in scouting and is working to finish his Eagle. Karen works for the city of Layton and enjoys her yard and garden. They are in the process of organizing their back yard to include several fruit trees and lots of different varieties of berries.

Hope that gives everyone a little bit of family news. As for us here, we are grateful to have the big fair week marathon underway and hope that we can survive the week without too much "on call" duty at the booth. Daddy does a masterful job of recruiting help and keeping the booth in business with personnel and commodities. He had to miss his meetings yesterday, which is always a let-down, but so far the shifts have been full and business fairly good.

In closing let me just say that I just received a phone call from Charles and Brenda. And Mike and Marci. They were together at the cabin at Lake Coeur d'Alene. Mike and Marci went to the temple on Friday and had called the Richards to see if they could watch the BYU football game with them on Saturday. Charles told them to meet them at the cabin which is only 45 minutes from Spokane and they did and they spent the weekend with them and will be joined today by Tera and her family. A big thank you to them for being so sweet to Mike and Marci!

[Dad] I don't have much to add. Last week was primarily spent in taking care of last-minute details for the Tiger Ear Booth. The attention to detail is paying off with a smooth-running operation thus far. I am grateful for the help from so many people throughout the council who help to fill all the shifts. By the time we are through we will have about 600 volunteers spend a four-hour shift. It is fun to think of it as running like a "well-oiled machine."

We had a staff meeting last Wednesday and patted ourselves on the back for our accomplishments thus far this year. Then we talked about what we need to do for the year end as far as membership and units and getting geared up for the next FOS campaign. I hate to admit it, but I am looking more and more eagerly toward retirement in four years.

How wonderful it was to visit with Karen, Gary and Linda in the backyard and to have the time to just relax and enjoy the moment. Also, the Logan experience with Jeremy and his bride and the family was a real highlight. It was so fun to have Naida there to share the experience with. She is so alert and intelligent and such a delightful person to be around. Shaunnie made a comment about the musical heritage that sifts down through Grandma Barbara's blood line. We have sure been blessed because of it!!!

September 18, 2005

[Mom] We learned on Saturday that we are scheduled to have carpet laid and the kitchen and dining room flooring installed a week from today, so this is going to be a big week for us to get the last of the painting completed. We are pleased with how it is looking and anxious to get it on the market before winter sets in. I know it has been especially challenging for Dad to find the time with all the demands on him at work.

Life has been especially hectic for SaraKay with cross country and play practices after school. She also gets up early to practice the piano and she has been pretty stressed. She decided to quit taking vocal lessons and get rid of one thing that was adding to her stress. If she can make it through this week, harvest break starts on Saturday and goes for two weeks and that is always a hassle but emotionally it is easy compared to the demands on her at school.

Last Thursday I spent part of the evening watching Prime Time in a report on the sequence of events regarding Katrina's devastation in New Orleans. Since we don't get cable, much of the daily and immediate coverage wasn't available to us. It was good for me to see the pictures and the people and get a feel for the scope of it. My heart aches for those who have lost everything. Following the program on Katrina there was an hour-long presentation on three natural disasters that experts feel are on the horizon. The three were a bird flu pandemic, massive earthquakes, and a nuclear bomb.

They took each disaster and talked about its effect on society and how we could secure ourselves against them. It was informative (and frightening). I kept thinking about the counsel the Church has given us regarding the storage of 72-hour kits, food and water and fuel where possible. It was interesting to see Governor Mike Leavitt, who is in the Bush Cabinet respond to questions regarding the country's supply of Tamiflu. Another expert gave tips on surviving a nuclear bomb if you lived anywhere around ground zero at a distance of 1/2 mile or farther.

To make a long story short, I recommitted us to keeping our year's supply usable and hope that each of you are doing your best to have some emergency supplies on hand. I know that our Asian branch has separate challenges and the Lord is aware of that. I keep going back to the talk Pres. Hinckley gave following 9/11. He said, *"Our safety lies in our personal righteousness."* I know that many good and righteous people will suffer along with the general populace, but I think there is a lot of peace that comes with personal and family preparedness.

When Daddy went to his early morning review with the full-time missionaries, they praised him on the job our missionary committee is doing. We really are seeing some good results from our combined efforts and there are still many, many families who we have never even met. We are now working with the Spanish missionaries and getting into the homes of some of the Hispanics. It is amazing to me how time-consuming this can be and it is overwhelming at times. The one thing that spurs us on is seeing the goodness in the people we visit and knowing their value to the Lord.

Another thing that we are involved in right now is a cantata on the Prophet Joseph Smith's life. It is a thrill!

[Dad] Most of the news for the past week revolve around our efforts on our project and the typical stuff from work. Last night I got a call from Dean P. Vernon, my missionary companion for 6 months in Hereford. What a surprise and a delight to visit with him and to find some parallels in our lives as well as some differences. He and his wife Sue are living in Cedar City and he is part time retired but still maintaining his law practice in Las Vegas. He sounded so much the same as 40 years ago.

October 3, 2005

Our sentiments echo those expressed by Paul and Jenny when they said, "Wasn't conference wonderful!" It must have been especially sweet for Stephani and Linds's family since they got to attend the "Spoken Word" as well as the morning session of conference in the Conference Center. I think it was a first for them and it was obvious from Sam's comments last night on chat that he had thoroughly enjoyed it.

We had a great time, too, with the visit of Shauntel and kids and Tim and Emily. They arrived about 8 p.m. Friday night after delivering Randy to his folks' home in Blackfoot so that he could use their high-speed internet for his Friday night work. It is always fun to have Camille and Archie around to liven things up.

It was also very sweet to get to meet Tim's girlfriend, Emily. Several of you called asking "How's the weather?" (or in other words, "How is Emily"), so I thought that I would give you a few interesting facts about her. She is from Phoenix,

AZ and has lived there most of her life. Her mother's sister lives in Aberdeen and so that side of the family always has its reunions at Sportsman's Park so she isn't entirely a stranger to Idaho. She is majoring in Geography/Tourism and will graduate in April. She enjoys cooking and often chooses cookbooks for her favorite reading material. She also sews and wore a cute skirt on Sunday that was her own handiwork. She plays the piano and enjoys music. She is the fourth of six children and her dad is a lawyer. She has dark brown, short hair styled similar to Marci's and in fact, I almost called her Marci all weekend. She is cute, cheerful, easy to have around, has beautiful blue eyes, a ready smile, is very slim and petite, and she enjoys running.She is about my height. Steph asked on a scale of 1-10 (10 being engaged) just where their relationship is, but I never had a quiet moment with Tim to talk over what's happening.

One of the things that happened that seemed typical of their relationship was when we were all sitting around visiting and half listening to the pathetic game with San Diego/BYU on Saturday night. When the rest of us retired to bed, Tim and Emily stayed up and were listening to the game in the dining room. The last thing I remember before going to sleep was hearing them visiting and then laughing and then visiting and laughing some more. It was so nice to have Tim so comfortable with Emily and feeling secure in the relationship.

We intended to visit SaraKay in the potato field and show Camille and Archie and Emily how the harvest works, but before we left to go make our visit, SaraKay called and said that Richard was going to let the crew off early and so not to come. That made for a pretty quiet day for all of us but ideal for watching conference and taking in the wonderful talks.

The group left about 1:00 on Sunday and made it back to Logan in time for Emily and Tim to visit her grandma in Ogden en route to Provo. They also stopped by Steph's and caught them home soon after their return from conference in Salt Lake.

On Monday I spent the day varnishing the kitchen cabinets while carpet was laid and Mardell Fresh worked on Formica for the kitchen. Everything should be done by tomorrow and we will take pictures and get it listed. It feels so good to have it nearly completed.

Today Daddy and I spent the morning at a missionary conference at our stake center for the southern half of the mission. It was so fun to be a part of that and to interact with the young missionaries. They are so full of enthusiasm and energy. I kept thinking of all our missionaries and what it was like for them while they were serving. That seems like a long time ago, doesn't it?

SaraKay is home early today from work because of rain. Hopefully it will clear off and allow them to finish up harvest this week. She is enjoying having Karina out there with her and even admitted today when she got home early that she was disappointed that they couldn't keep working. That sounds more like it!

[Dad] Conference was wonderful and it sure seemed different to be able to stay home and enjoy it instead of fighting the crowds and traffic in Salt Lake. It is always inspiring to be in the Conference Center, but I don't think I get any more out of conference there than I do at home. This year, BSA and General Motors have an arrangement and Jeff Gordon and Chevy dealers are promoting the "Race to Cub Scouting." We had a joining activity at Blackfoot Motors with refreshments, balloons, banners and signs, a pinewood derby track, and the incentive of a free car (pinewood derby in a lunchbox). We were able to pick up six new boys that night and because of the publicity have had several others come and sign up.

Probably the biggest news is getting close to the end with our project house and trying to get it on the market. It looks beautiful with the new floor coverings and all the cabinets refinished. We decided to go ahead and have the counter top replaced, so Mardell Fresh is working on that right now and is supposed to be through by tomorrow. We will have the appliances delivered and hooked up on Friday. Some baseboards and final cleaning are about all that we have left inside. We have had the opportunity of showing it to a few friends and they love what we have done and are certainly encouraging with their comments.

October 10, 2005

[Mom] Have you ever taken a hike up a mountain and thought that you were almost there and just as you reached the supposed summit, you discovered that there were more hills just ahead yet to climb? That kind of describes my feelings right now about our house project. It seems like we are almost completed and then there is just one more thing that needs doing. Last week we decided that even though we aren't completely

ready, we are finished enough that we are going to get it on the market and give ourselves three months before Christmas to try to sell it. Most of the advice we have received has been that summer and fall are great months to sell a house but following Christmas there are several very slow months.

The good news is that Daddy is the ultimate handyman and continues to awe me with all that he knows about fixing things. He just figures things out and does a thorough job of whatever he puts his hands to. He is taking a vacation day today and installing new toilets, connecting the new appliances, and other details. I am going to join him later and finish up the painting on the laundry room doors. We are very pleased with how things look and very grateful that we have not had any unhappy surprises as we have gone over every inch of the home and made the necessary improvements. We have learned a lot and have plans to upgrade a few things here in our own home that we haven't been happy with. But…not for a while. We are both pretty tired and will welcome the break from this project once it is completed.

I want to let you know about SaraKay's play. I also want you to know that we fully understand if it doesn't work for you to come since school is in session and there are so many things going on. I'm assuming that the Friday night and Saturday matinee would work best for everyone. It would be fun if you could all come for the Saturday matinee. I need to know so that I can get tickets. If you want to stay the weekend, we would be delighted. Look at your schedules and let me know. I guess this might be the time to thank you married siblings (and Tim) for your continuing interest and support for SaraKay. She has often lamented that she missed out on all the dramas of the early Larsen family experiences, but she recognizes that she is definitely a part of the Larsen bunch and she feels of your loving support for her.

Last night on chat we had a pretty good group including Laurel who we have missed for several weeks. Some of you asked about Tim and I reported that Tim and Emily are still dating and things are going well. Tim flies to Phoenix this Wednesday and returns Thursday, hosted by one of the big four accounting companies. He has been interested in this location and hopes things work out. He is also interested in the Boise area. His biggest reservation about AZ is that the housing market is unbelievably expensive and he is concerned about what it will take to get into a moderately priced home. Time will tell. If he gets an offer, he will be spending part of the Christmas holiday house hunting.

Tonight we are going to get some potatoes from Richard Tominaga for our year's supply. We hope to also get some for Kathy, Deniece, Grandma, Steph, Shauntel, and David's families. I always feel more secure just knowing that if we had a disaster we could "hole up" in the storage room and eat a raw potato! Well, maybe not just a raw potato but you get the idea. Richard is so good to let us get some each year!

I need to comment on our missionary efforts. We continue to find ways to involve ourselves with the less active families. This past week one of the families had their 4-year-old daughter run over by a four-wheeler. It knocked her out as she flew over the handle bars and under the machine. She was rushed to the ER and the bishop was able to be there for them and show concern. Their neighbor, who we are also fellowshipping called me and we called back and forth several times before the incident was over. It was truly miraculous that the little girl only sustained cuts and bruises and was released the same evening of the accident. The neighbor who has been very cool towards me really warmed up during the episode and I felt like she visited with me freely and we were able to be friends. Another milestone. We are teaching her daughter and she has been non-committal to this point. It's slow but we are making some progress.

I need to go. We were grateful for John and Laurel's safe return from Vietnam and echo their sentiments that the world is a beautiful place and that there is a deep and basic goodness in all cultures and people. We love and pray for you.

[Dad] Yesterday, as I tried to hook up the stove, I found that previous connections just didn't work--we had gone from a drop in stove to a slide in because of the difference in cost, but with the slide in, the electrical box was in the wrong place for the drawer to close. I had to go down in the crawl space, fight the spiders and dead mice, pull out the wiring and drill a new hole in the floor and rewire. I ended up with about 1/16th of an inch to spare for the drawer to close and everything else fitting perfectly. That is an example of some of the challenges we have been facing as we wrap up our project. Now, for some reason the hot water heater breaker is tripping and I can't find anything wrong with it. I have needed to extend

the dryer vent tubing so it would hook up right. We are replacing the closet doors for the laundry room and getting them painted. With the improvements we have made, the house almost seems like new!! We are really pleased with the way things look and will be pleased to get a few good hours work on the outside before winter sets in.

It was a quick trip to the Tominaga Farm last night to get potatoes. We loaded up the pickup with the spuds we picked and bagged. It was nice to not have to load them in the van and get it all dirty. With our project, the family reunion, and other work, it has really been nice to have a pickup again to haul stuff.

At work, one of my men, Dave Palmer--who covers Jackson, Star Valley, and Teton Districts, has handed in his resignation as of the end of October. So, we are scrambling to fill that spot before winter sets in and hopefully, I won't have to do too much traveling to those areas to cover meetings and support with snow-covered roads.

October 16, 2005

[Dad] Sue is in Salt Lake with her mother for a couple of days--it is interesting how things started coming together over the past two weeks for her to go see her mom and then when she called her on Friday, she found out she was sick--apparently a reaction to her flu shot--and so Sue left yesterday to go be with her and take her some potatoes. SaraKay and I are getting along fine but look forward to her return tomorrow--it isn't the same around here when you take the heart out of our home.

Today was a historic day--it was the first all-Hispanic conference for all Hispanics within the Idaho Pocatello mission. It was held in the Blackfoot East Stake Center and was attended by around 6-700 saints--with a few Anglo's sprinkled throughout the audience. The presiding authority was Elder Shane Bowen from Idaho Falls, a newly sustained Area Authority Seventy. I have known him for years through the insurance business--he and his wife are delightful, sweet people.

His companion was an Elder Hammond and his wife--Tim's mission president!! I had a delightful visit with Sister Hammond and she really praised Tim as did her husband during the few moments I had with him. They said he was such a hard-working, conscientious missionary and they would like him to keep in touch via email. She has a page for each missionary and she keeps it up to date with information about their marriages, children, and accomplishments. Her parting words were to give Tim a grande abbrazzo from them.

The whole conference was in Spanish--with speakers from Rexburg, Burley, Idaho Falls, and the choir was our own Blackfoot Branch. They filled the choir seats all the way across on both sides and then some extra chairs besides. SaraKay and Angela Winder and Genesis Romano played a violin trio to accompany the opening song--"I Know That My Redeemer Lives," and it was beautiful. I couldn't help but weep a little as I thought about the evolution of the little Spanish Sunday School class in the Moreland 2nd Ward nearly 30 years ago while I was bishop and what had become of it.

One of our dear friends from those early days, Edwardo, was there and it was good to meet his eldest daughter and give him a big hug. I also reflected on the time and emotional investment in the branch by Gary and Linda and by Dad and Mom. Our family has quite a commingled heritage with the Branch. SaraKay and Angela were planning on leaving right after they had played and going home to their other meetings a little late, but I talked them into staying for the rest of the conference and was able to get them headsets so they could listen to the translation as it was broadcast by Bill Egbert and Brian Waters. I think they enjoyed it and were glad that they stayed and participated in this historic event. Because many had traveled so far, the West Stake had sack lunches for everyone afterwards and so we didn't have to worry about lunch without a Mom.

Last year during the trek we had a young man who wanted to leave. His dad, Brian Waters, was with the trek and had been in the hills fasting and praying that his son would stay and have a change of heart. He decided to stay and seemed to have a good time with the square dancing and the rest of the events as the trek experience came to a close. He did have a change of heart during the past year and just received his mission call to the Philippines--his dad was so excited to share that news with me and I was thrilled to be able to rejoice with him over "he that was lost, and is found."

With our project, I finished hooking up the new appliances and reinstalling the sink in the new counter tops. The home is ready on the inside and just some things to do on the outside to finish off. We are so pleased with how it looks and have

it listed in the paper and have had a few calls on it and have shown it a couple of times. We are planning on getting some pictures to send out to those of you that have been especially curious and interested.

Let me just express my love in closing. Each of you mean so much to us and we empathize with your highs and lows as you progress with your families and your eternal development. God does live, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the only path to eternal joy, we are led by inspired prophets, seers, and revelators today, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints is the only true church with God's authority on the face of the earth.

[Mom] We've had a frustrating time this week without our internet connection working. I can't believe how much we had been accustomed to having ready access to everyone through email and to be without it is terrible. Anyway, we had a repairman come today and we are back in business.

As many of you know, I left on Saturday to spend the weekend with Grandma in SLC. I had been planning a trip for several weeks since it has been so long since I've been for a visit. I also wanted to get the potatoes delivered to Kathy and Deniece. I called Grandma on Thursday and Kathy was there and said that Mom had a bad reaction to her flu shot and was very ill with a cold and bad cough. She asked if I could come Saturday and help out. I was grateful that I was already thinking of coming and could adjust my schedule to fit the needs. I arrived Saturday afternoon and stayed until Monday. Grandma was very weak and having a difficult time and by Sunday afternoon we decided to get her in to the hospital. She was diagnosed with pneumonia and viral bronchitis. We were grateful that we had taken her in and pleased to know that she was getting good care.

The checking in process in that big hospital took us five hours! By the time Kathy and I were finished with all the details, we didn't leave the hospital until almost 11 p.m.! I couldn't believe it. Anyway, Grandma is home today and Deniece is there with her for a couple of days until she is able to manage on her own.

October 24, 2005

[Mom] We have had such a beautiful Indian summer the past few weeks. The trees have been gorgeous in their bright fall colors and the days warm and sunny. There is something special about fall! It is definitely my favorite season! I wish that we didn't have Daylight Savings Time so that we weren't thrust into the early evenings, but I guess it is here to stay.

Mark and Rita have been in Jerome welcoming their new grandchild and came to see us on Thursday. We had dinner together and they went with Daddy to see the house. Mark has done so much remodeling of homes in the last few years that we were anxious to get his input on things. His main criticism was that we needed to get the weeds cut down in the back yard so that it looks better. We have been so busy and focused on completing the interior that we had not found time to address it but on Saturday Daddy spent several hours working on it and the change is amazing. Now to find the sprinkler system. It has been so nice for me to not have to go in each day and work.

Our Sunday was rewarding. We had four of our less active members come to sacrament meeting yesterday. Three were children that we have been working with. They all three participated in the annual Primary Program in sacrament meeting. Another was a lady that the Wray's have been fellowshipping for several months. When Tami Wray came into our investigator class she was so happy to see their efforts bear fruit!

Last night the mission put on a musical fireside on the Atonement. A woman who I have been fellowshipping for several months came and brought her brother and granddaughter. I think it is the first time she has been in the church in about 25 years. She is considering trying to get back to the temple. She was married in the temple but later divorced. What a sweet sight to see her there last night. Our thrust this week is to get an invitation out to all young families in the ward, member and nonmember, who might be interested in coming for our ward's Trunk or Treat. We are going to take around invitations and encourage them to join us. (We use every excuse we can think of to associate with those that are less active and nonmembers).

SaraKay finished up Cross Country last week and life has been a little saner. She is excited for the upcoming performances and eats and sleeps "Seussical the Musical." We got her costume finished up for her part in Cast A (one of the crowd) and that was a relief. We spent a couple hours Saturday morning at DI shopping for something we could alter and decorate and came up with a cute idea.

Steph and kids were here on Friday night and performed for us. Steph was at the piano, Kate the flute, Sam the oboe, and Josh on the cello. They played "O Holy Night" and it was so neat to see them all playing together. Prior to that they each performed on the piano and that was a treat, too! It was rather touching to listen to them play and feel like it was "payday" for Dad and I, as well as for Stephani and Linds. Having the grandkids doing music has really multiplied our joy. I know how much work it is to help your kids develop their talents but it certainly pays dividends!

On Saturday morning Steph and kids and SaraKay and I all went to DI to find some things for costuming and we all found some things we needed. They had a great time finding Josh his Halloween costume (a safari hat, vest, and pants) and Katie was looking for a blazer for debate tournaments. She found a couple of jackets and a skirt as well as some cute shoes. We really had fun! It always feels great to get a bargain.

Tim is awaiting word on his Phoenix job interview and is feeling frustrated with the firm in Boise that has been so slow to respond. He continues to pursue them both. He and Emily are spending a lot of time together. He has met her folks and he was really impressed with them. He is ready to move the relationship to the next level but she is happy with the status quo so he is trying to be patient. He certainly has some big decisions to make in these next few weeks! He would appreciate your prayers.

I received a phone call from Becky concerning Christmas. She and the kids are going to come for the week before Christmas. She will invite Dot and Bruce to join us for dinner while they are here. We will plan on having a Christmas party either here or in Logan sometime during her stay and then she will fly back the 23rd.

[Dad] Today was the last day for one of my men, Dave Palmer. I am going to have to cover a bunch of his meetings during the month of November as well as popcorn delivery and money collection and Scouting for Food. I know it is going to be interesting to keep up with four districts during this month and to keep the momentum going with membership, Friends of Scouting, and organizing new units. Thank goodness that an existing district executive is going to transfer to Jackson and take over that service area beginning with December so I know it won't go on indefinitely. Dan Deakin has worked for three years in Wolverine and Bing Pow districts and as camp director over Island Park. He is a good executive and will do a great job--I am excited to have him on my team.

For Home Evening tonight we read through and discussed Susan Tanner's conference talk about "The Sanctity of the Body." What a great talk! She is right on target and we enjoyed the message she had about the body, Satan's punishment in not having one, and his attempts to get us to abuse ours, the importance of treating our body as a temple, of modesty being more than the altitude of hemlines and necklines but the attitude of our hearts, striving to receive His image in our countenances, not giving inordinate attention to our outward appearance, and the intimate link between body, mind, and spirit.

Let me just close with this quote from Aristotle: "Excellence is an art won by training and habituation. We do not act rightly because we have virtue or excellence, but rather we have those because we have acted rightly. We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit..."

October 30, 2005

[Mom] Daddy will be leaving on Wednesday and will stay in the Jackson Hole, Star Valley, and Teton districts for several days attending meetings and delivering popcorn orders to the districts. He has a horrendous week ahead of him with all the travel and business to transact. I will be substituting for this week and of course, SaraKay has the first of eight performances starting on Thursday of their musical. It will be a relief to have that successfully completed. SaraKay has been taking vitamin C, drinking honey water, and anything else she can think of to help her voice. She is worried that those of you who are coming to see the performance will be disappointed but I assured her that we will be a very sympathetic audience!

Last week I substituted for three days at the Charter School. They are housed in their own new building and that is a wonderful improvement. We have our own playground and lunchroom and aren't constantly having to be at the mercy of others. It really makes the job much more pleasant.

We have a family interested in our home. They called to get information on how to make an offer and we are hoping that we can get earnest money

this week. We have hardly thought about the house this past week

Last Tuesday Daddy and I delivered invitations to the ward Trunk or Treat party on Halloween. We got into several homes that we haven't been in before. Many of them are Hispanics and we couldn't help noticing all the boys scouting age that aren't involved in our ward's Pack. We are looking into finding a way to involve them. We have such wonderful support from the ward. We just mention a situation and they get right on it. One of the ladies we have been working with for over a year attended sacrament meeting today. I kept looking for her and she wasn't there when the meeting started so I felt so bad. Later when we went up to sing in the choir number, I spotted her. What a thrill to have her attend. She said that she would be back next week. We certainly hope she can start making the gospel a part of her life again.

Monday night: Well, we just returned from our Trunk or Treat activity. We served five gallons of hot chocolate, took about 50 pictures of costumed kids, and had a great time. We set up a little area for taking pictures and then Daddy (dressed in his kapote and devil wig) made the rounds taking pictures of all the little goblins. We had over a hundred children show up although our usual Primary is about 35 children, so we knew we were pulling in quite a few that don't normally attend. We announced yesterday to the RS and Priesthood that we needed their support tonight to make it fun and many of the older people came even though they didn't need to. That's the kind of people we have in this ward! Our missionary committee all dressed up and handed out stuff.

[Dad] One of the highlights of the week for me is reading the family letters. It was such a treat to have one from Okanogan to join the regulars from Madison and Seoul. Selling tickets for Seussical has been a major thrust for the last few days on top of everything else. I think SaraKay is up to 51 tickets sold vs. the 30 she had to sell. I know that her parents have been an asset with their contacts.

Saturday was a big day of interviews for Cedar Badge Staff. The board divides into about six small groups that perform the interviews. They have questions to use and every boy has to be interviewed four times. He gets a score from each group that interviews him and then following the interviews on November 12th the board will make their selections. There were about 64 youth interviewed on Saturday and we have interviews scheduled for about 30 more on the 12th. There will be a total youth staff of 110 and adult staff of about 50 volunteers. What an awesome program!!!

November 7, 2005

[Mom] I've had a quiet day today after all the excitement of the weekend. It felt good to not have to leave this morning for the charter school like I have for the last two weeks. I puttered around here, doing laundry and enjoying my memories of our whirlwind weekend. Friday night Dave and Andrea and Shauntel and their families arrived while we were attending SaraKay's first performance. By the time we got home the grandkids were pretty much settled for the night but we had fun visiting and getting reacquainted with little McKay. At his stage of life, every month makes a huge difference and he is sure a cute blue-eyed little boy!

On Saturday morning Daddy, Dave, Joseph and Archie raked leaves. Our lush windbreak creates a huge mess each fall and we have a big job cleaning up the dead leaves. Usually SaraKay and I handle most of it, but this year with all the work on the house, substituting, and play rehearsals, we haven't had time to get started on it. I really appreciated David helping Daddy with the task. It was so bitter cold that morning and I worried that they were all going to catch pneumonia. Every time Joseph came in the house we would add a few more layers to keep him warm. One time I asked him if he would like to stay in and get warm and he said that he was helping his Dad and they needed him. He told me to get the camera and come see what they were doing. By this time Archie wanted to join the work detail so I bundled him up and he went outside to offer assistance. After the wheelbarrow was loaded with leaves, Joseph or Archie would lay spread eagle on the top of it while Dave wheeled it into the pasture and dumped everything on a huge pile. Their efforts saved me so much time and energy and I really appreciated it!

While Shauntel, Andrea, SaraKay and Laurel made a quick trip to D.I., Anna Sue, Camille, and Chantelle drew pictures and decorated SaraKay's room while I finished up preparations for dinner. By 11:00 Tim and Emily arrived and we were able to keep on schedule so that we could get to the performance early and get good seats. We got front row seats in the auditorium for the grandkids and the rest of us sat behind

them one row. So much of the action takes place right there in the area in front of the stage and I knew that if we could get good seats, the kids wouldn't have any trouble staying interested. It was fun to watch them watch the performance and respond to the colorful songs and costumes. Of course, it was an added treat to have SaraKay playing Gertrude! She did a great job!

When we arrived home we had soup and scones and got in some more visiting time. Steve took Dave and Andrea in to see the house and Shauntel took some time with SaraKay, critiquing her performance and giving her ideas for some other actions to use during her songs. It was fun to draw from Shaunnie's expertise. Our only regret was that we didn't have her around sooner.

November 9, 2005

[Mom] Sunday morning we attended sacrament meeting and then Dave and Shauntel and their families came home and I fed them before sending them on their way. David was flying out early Monday for Nashville, TN, of all places, and was going to be having dinner with Steve and Bonnie Monday night. He will be returning on Friday. I know how tough these trips are on young mothers so my thoughts have been with Andrea. Laurel and Anna are such great helpers, but little McKay can't go through the night without several feedings and that can wear a body out pretty quickly.

The big news of the week is that Tim signed on with a firm in Boise and will be starting with them following graduation in April. They flew him in again this week, talked benefits and salary, and he signed before flying back on Tuesday. It doesn't seem possible that we will have two kids in Boise, but we are certainly pleased with the prospect! Tim has been very impressed with the company and what he will be doing and feels great about the people he will be working with.

It was great getting better acquainted with Emily. She is a lovely girl and we are certainly hoping that Tim can talk her into joining the family! (We all tried to be on our best behavior for the weekend!) Tim will be going to Phoenix for Thanksgiving and spending some time with her family, although he has met her parents on one of their stays in Provo last month and thinks highly of them.

Our thoughts and prayers are with all of you. When we finish up SaraKay's last performance we'll post some pics so you can share in her experience. We appreciated those of you who came, called, and in other ways showed support. She feels so fortunate!

November 15, 2005

I think winter has arrived! Today was blustery and cold with a skiff of snow and more promised for the week ahead. I always have mixed emotions about settling in for the winter. On the one hand, I dread the hassle of slick roads and the confinement but on the other hand, it feels good to put aside the yard work and just focus on things indoors. I can hardly believe that Christmas is just around the corner!

It was a big relief last week to finish up the Seussical chapter of our lives and return to some normalcy. Daddy and I sat down last Saturday and tried to get the pictures we took posted so that the family could see them, but eventually we gave up. Later Steph called and informed us of a service they have enrolled for called PhotoMax. Basically, a person signs up and then can post their pictures online for other friends and family to view. The service also offers other amenities like ordering prints, etc.

As an example, Lindsay posted two sets of pictures (albums) for us to view. One album was of Mike and Marci's wedding and the other of the Larsen reunion 2005. Each of us can view the entire set of pictures and then if we desire, order prints for our own use. It was so fun to see the wonderful shots Linds took of both events. Now we need to get ours posted. Steph was going to forward the information to all of you so that you can use it if you want. Thanks, Linds, for the memories!

Sunday was our stake conference and the first one for our new stake presidency. It was wonderful! All of the talks were so inspiring and applicable. Daddy and I sang in the stake choir that performed two numbers, one of which was "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing." We didn't have an orchestra accompanying us so it wasn't as powerful as on the CD but it was still a thrill to sing it with that wonderful choir!

In December we will be performing with that same group in a tribute to the Prophet Joseph. The cantata was written by Kenneth Cope and has narration to go with it. We will be performing it on two evenings, December 10th and 11th. It has been difficult music and quite a challenge but we have seen enough of the entire program to know

that it will be a very special presentation. I'm sure that many of you are attending similar programs in your own stakes. We are continuing to work on Pres. Hinckley's challenge to read the Book of Mormon. Daddy is through and well into D&C and I am in Ether. SaraKay isn't quite that far but we are going to make it.

We were happy to hear that John and Laurel, Mike and Marci, and Paul and Jenny are expecting babies in 2006. If all goes well, Shauntel and Randy will also be getting a baby from Korea. Thank goodness we are waiting a year to have another Larsen reunion! That would be quite tricky to have four newborns added to the mix! We hope that Laurel and Jenny can manage with their morning sickness and get past the three-month mark and start feeling better. It's always a struggle those first few months. Our prayers are with you.

Our young couple who saw the house a couple weeks ago came again and said that they will make us an offer. We hope it will be a good one and that we can agree on a price. They seem pretty set on making it work. We'll see. I went in today and spruced up the kitchen a little and brought home a few more things from the garage. I hadn't been in for several weeks and as I walked through the house I couldn't help thinking what a great little house it is going to be for someone!

I'm going to close and get ready for bed. Daddy will be leaving tomorrow for Teton and then be in Jackson Hole on Thursday. He will be so glad to get a man hired to handle those districts. It is a lot of miles to cover and now that the weather has turned bad, it is a constant worry to be driving in it. This Friday is the annual auction and SaraKay and I will be helping with that, and then on Saturday is the duet festival and then SaraKay and a bunch of friends are going to a Jon Schmidt concert at BYU-I.

[Dad Last week on Thursday I went to Star Valley for their District Meetings and Roundtable. It is sure a beautiful valley but it seems like a lot of homes are being built and the property has really appreciated in value. That night I got home about 11:30 p.m. I have been doing some solicitation for the Holiday Auctions and helped some with the setup last Friday for the one in Idaho Falls. It was the best one yet and will probably end up netting around $50,000. The competition is on to see if Pocatello will do as well or better.

Our first session of conference was the temple session on Friday night. We decided we wanted to go to an earlier session and then attend the chapel session at 7:15. We have a new temple presidency consisting of President John Groberg, Harold Davis, and someone else. Sue and I then ate fish & prime rib at the temple cafeteria before heading home.

Saturday I had to be in Pocatello by 7:30 a.m. to open up the office for Cedar Badge Staff interviews. We interviewed another 40 applicants, had a brief lunch, and then had the staff draft conducted by the youth members of the board that had done all the interviewing. I was impressed with the maturity they exhibited whenever there was someone wanted by more than one troop. There wasn't ever any contention or fighting.

That night we attended the Saturday night session of conference and thoroughly enjoyed the speakers and music. Sunday morning at 7:00 was the Priesthood Leadership session and we received excellent instruction from the Stake Presidency. The highlight of Sunday's session was the stake choir. All in all, it was one of the best stake conferences ever and I enjoyed being in the audience. I was impressed with how many dear friends we have in this stake and the love that I still feel for so many even after being released.

Tonight I need to go to Driggs for Teton Districts Roundtable and Charter turn in, and then on Thursday go to Jackson for the same. I will be glad to get Dan Deakin located in Jackson and taking care of things over there after the first of December.

November 22, 2005

[Mom] This is going to be a short one. I have spent the last two days getting things ready for our trip to Boise. I thought that if I had Dave and Andrea's Christmas ready that it would save me mailing costs if I delivered it when we made the trip for Thanksgiving. It has been hectic but I finished up things today. In fact, I had a truly wonderful day just puttering around and preparing some of the food for the feast on Thursday. At lunch time, totally unexpected, SaraKay and her bunch of friends, who had just finished up their finals came with boxes of macaroni and cheese in hand and joined me for a quick lunch before going back to school to watch the upperclassmen try out for the musical "Ragtime." They were all so jovial and grateful to have the trimester over and move on. It has been an exhausting one.

Perhaps the most wonderful news of the week is that we had 11 inactive members come to our meetings Sunday. We had arranged for rides for some of them, but one Hispanic family who we have been visiting now for several months showed up and surprised us all! It was so neat to have them come and to see the ward gather around and involve them. Hopefully they could get a feel of how much they are missed and will start coming on a regular basis. Between Sharon Moss and myself, we pick up some of the Astuhuaman children each Sunday and bring them with us.

This week when I called, I invited the mother to send the six-year-old boy who hasn't come yet. When I have previously invited him, his mother says that he can't sit still that long but this time she called me back and said that he wanted to come, too. So, I filled a bag with all sorts of toys and pencils and paper and he, his three sisters, and a non-member neighbor girl sat between Sharon and I and we all got along fine. I had also included some crackers just in case the four-year-old got hungry and it was quite a bench full but a real treat to see them so excited about being in church. Anyway, Daddy and I were both on cloud nine when we realized that so many of our contacts had responded and came to meetings. Hopefully they'll keep coming!

The hot subject on chat this week was, "What are you doing for Thanksgiving?" Laurel mentioned that a hotel in Chongqing hosts the expat families and that is where they will be. Steph will be in St. George with Linds' family, Shauntel in Blackfoot with the Archibalds, Mike and Marci in D.C. with Marci's brother and family, Steve and Bonnie staying close to home in Nashville, David and Andrea hosting us, Paul and Jenny with friends in Madison, and Tim with Emily in Phoenix. I have talked to Becky lately but we've never talked about Thanksgiving, but all I can remember was that she found a turkey in Seoul. In closing let me express my appreciation for all the Lord's blessings to me and each member of our family. I am so grateful for the gospel in our lives and for the anchor that it gives to each of us as we weather life's storms. May the Lord bless and keep each one of you.

[Dad] Last week was a big one with lots of miles. On Tuesday I went to Driggs to deliver another batch of popcorn--$3,000 worth to a nephew of Neil Hillman who really gets into selling popcorn. I also picked up some charters and then headed home. On Thursday I went to Jackson. Paul Vogelheim, the District Chairman for Jackson, had set up an appointment with the key people in the Soccer Association there and we discussed our desires and efforts to organize a Cub Scout Soccer program to work in conjunction with their efforts to bring more boys--particularly Hispanics--into soccer and to expose them to the values of Scouting. They were excited to work with us and so we are moving ahead. I also had some other contacts and phone calls to make while in Jackson. That night was their Roundtable and I gave a presentation on the Aims and Methods of Scouting and my poem about clay and pins and badges not being our goal but building character.

Friday was spent in setting up for the Holiday Auction in Pocatello. We had the best crowd we have ever had in Pocatello and nearly made $50,000. Together with the IF auction the week before, we increased our auction take by about 35%. Saturday was Scouting for Food collection and we had another successful drive. A lady named Bobbette with SEICAA was our contact person for delivery of our proceeds. When I visited with her, she said she was on the verge of crying because of all the food that was coming in and knowing the needy that would be helped with it.

That morning was also a duet recital. SaraKay, Zack, Kwani, and Whitney Balls played a quartet of Stars & Stripes Forever arranged by Mack Wilberg. It was awesome!!!!

Sunday was a real payoff for all our efforts over the last few months. It was fun to have Brother Twiggs stand up in Priesthood Meeting and say it seemed like he was in the wrong ward because there were so many people there he didn't know because of the efforts of our ward missionaries.

We are so grateful for the Lord's bounteous blessings to us this year. We are most grateful for wonderful children who are doing good things with their lives and teaching their children about the Gospel and their Savior, Jesus Christ--the fount of every blessing.

December 1, 2005

[Mom] Sorry to be late with this. The days are rushing by and I've been busy "making a list and checking it twice" as I'm sure many of you are doing. We were going to decorate the tree on Monday for FHE, but by the time we got through the day we all agreed that we were too tired to haul everything up from the storage room and move furniture around to accommodate the

tree. I think that is the first time in many years that SaraKay hasn't been clamoring to get the decorations up but she was too tired, too.

The big news of the week is that SaraKay got her driver's license and is now driving on her own. The downside of it (aside from the increased insurance costs) is that the weather has been so bad and the roads so slick that we haven't dared let her take the car to school. She's been a little disappointed but understands our reasoning. We have had several snowstorms and more expected in the next couple of days.

I spent part of yesterday at the clinic having tests in preparation for surgery in January. When I had my annual appointment last February, Dr. Peterson said that I needed to have it done and I've been putting it off waiting for a more opportune time. I wanted to remind Dr. Peterson that when he removed my ovary several years ago that I wanted him to do a complete hysterectomy then but he didn't want to, so now I have to get the job finished up. January is always a little quieter with the holiday rush over, so that is what I'm going to do. Since Dr. Peterson retired, I have been referred to Dr. Ericksen in I.F. and he will do the surgery. I have heard through several sources that he is a fine surgeon and some have even referred to him as "magical" in his abilities. When I heard that word, I immediately knew that he was the one for me since my body needs a little "magic" right now.

Several of you have asked about Tim. Things are still up in the air with his relationship. He loved the time he had in Phoenix with her family and feels like she is the girl for him, but she still is struggling to get a confirmation.

This next week will be our Joseph Smith commemoration. We have practiced each Tuesday for the last several months and it is going to be a very special event. Between orchestra dress rehearsal and concert and four nights next week committed to dress rehearsals and performances, it is going to be hectic.

Daddy has enjoyed being a part of the brass section in orchestra since being released from the stake presidency, and although his scout meetings often occupy him on Wednesday, Linnea is willing to take him whenever he can go and I know he is making a difference. It's especially fun for SaraKay and him to attend together.

[Dad] We went to Harry Potter last Saturday and really enjoyed it but felt it had definitely moved out of the realm of kid's movies. It was so much darker and gruesome. Work has been hard and demanding. Last night I was trying to make phone calls to Cub Scout leaders and track down boys that weren't registered that should be so that we could finish November ahead of where we were last year while taking care of Blackfoot District Meetings and other things. We made it and the twenty boys I found yesterday made a difference. But then I came home and was sick and threw up and wrestled with the covers trying to get warm.

December 6, 2005

[Dad] This week is full of dress rehearsals and productions for the Orchestra Christmas Concert and our stake production of Brother Joseph. SaraKay has started rehearsals for the next musical, "Ragtime." At work the pace continues as we try to meet our goals.

Sunday was a special day as we had a rich outpouring of the spirit in our meetings and a strong affirmation that what we are doing in our Ward Mission is bearing fruit and the ward is really becoming missionary conscious. Our ward fast was dedicated to expression of thanks for the missionary experiences we have been blessed with and praying for continuing success.

Our choir is working on some challenging and beautiful numbers for the program on Christmas day and our ranks are swelling as people in the ward are responding to the pleas for support.

Sunday night after the 1st Presidency Christmas Devotional Broadcast, we went out to Gary and Linda's to deliver our annual pecan log and had such a wonderful visit with them. I think back over the past and there were some rocky times, but we have all tried to keep relationships amicable and what they should be and those efforts have paid off with sweet dividends at this stage. Their Christmas decorations are so classy--especially the "Santa room." It was great to catch up on all their kids; they can be justifiably proud.

[Mom] We did finally get our tree up and decorated on Friday although the outside lights will have to wait until this next week. I continue to get things finished up and mailed off for Christmas. Just a word to those of you who get packages. Nothing inside is wrapped so please don't open the cardboard box until you are ready to see the gifts.

The weather here has been very cold and it's expected that it will worsen as the week

progresses. SaraKay had her first scary experience driving last week. She was approaching our driveway and there were cars coming towards her and behind her and she didn't make the turn and couldn't get the car to stop so she ran off into the small borrow pit by the Ellis's. Once she left the roadbed, the snow just dragged her down further and she couldn't get back out. She came running in the house sharing her dilemma with me. Fortunately, there were some strong boys sledding at Hanni's and they all came over and helped push while I drove it out of the snow bank. It really shook SaraKay up but fortunately nobody was hurt.

Grandma Ilene called on Saturday and left the message that my Uncle Delos's wife, Pat, had passed away. Then she commented that on both sides of the family, there are only three left: Grandma Ilene and her brother, Don, and Uncle Warren's wife, Merle. Wow! That is truly amazing! I guess I need to quit teasing Grandma about all her home remedies and herbal medicines. She will have the last laugh as she outlives them all. We are so grateful that she has a good quality of life.

December 12, 2005

[Mom] Well, our Joseph Smith presentation is over and we are able to get back to preparations for the upcoming holidays. Our first performance was poorly attended but last night people were hanging from the rafters! It was certainly a thrill for us to be a part of the choir. Normally in our ward choir I feel like if I falter the entire alto section does too, but in this stake choir, I could just mouth the words and no one would miss me.

That was a real relief since I had an episode with asthma Saturday afternoon and could hardly breathe, let alone sing that night. We had gone to help one of our investigators move Saturday afternoon and hadn't been there very long before I realized that I was in trouble. I knew that she had cats in her home in Moreland but I didn't know she had cats in her Blackfoot apartment, and by the time I realized it, it was too late. Daddy brought me home immediately and I took some Benadryl but the damage was done and I battled all afternoon trying to get feeling better. Although by Sunday I was feeling better, when I walked this morning I could tell I wasn't 100%.

Thanks to all of you who checked in on Daddy's birthday. I purchased a tuxedo shirt, tie, and cummerbund for him and gave it to him a day early so that he could use it for the annual Christmas concert. He had seen one in Penny's on one of our shopping trips and commented that he would like it. At first I thought it was a strange thing to request, but when he put it on with his dark suit, he looked really handsome and professional and I had several people at the concert comment on how spiffy he looked. He has enjoyed supporting Linnea in the community orchestra and has committed to being in the orchestra for the Ragtime performances coming up in February. He said the music is difficult but he is going to give it a try. It has been especially fun for him to share the experience with SaraKay.

Tonight for home evening we are going to deliver some pecan logs to neighbors and friends. We have made about 75. It has been easier each year that I do it. It's fun to deliver them and feel like people look forward to getting them each year. In the Richards' family letter I got from Maureen last week she said they made 60 pounds of fudge on Saturday! Wish we lived closer and could have them put us on their delivery list! We are excited to have Becky and the bunch arrive this Thursday and hope that we can muster up some fun activities that will bring them Christmas cheer.

We will be leaving Saturday morning and going to Logan to spend most of the day with Steph and Shaunnie and families. Becky's kids will enjoy the chance to see cousins and I'm taking our Christmas cookie decoration stuff and hope we can do some decorating like we did at Dave and Andrea's. We will be coming home in time for SaraKay's concert that evening.

[Dad] "My Servant Joseph" was certainly a highlight of the week. We have worked on it hard enough that we have finally gotten used to the music and it was a moving experience. Many people longed for some traditional hymns like "Praise to the Man." There is no doubt that Kenneth Cope is very gifted. When the choir sang the last number, we about lifted the roof with the last note and we received a lot of compliments. My favorites were solos by Ron Simmons and a duet he sang with Dr. Bryce Moser--they were Joseph and Hyrum--"Brothers."

Earlier in the week I had a dress rehearsal and then the choir concert. The concert went pretty well--the first half of classical numbers was the best. The first number was a Concerto for Two Violas by Telemann. SaraKay played the keyboard--harpsichord--and her friends Zac Hansen and Kwani Hale were the featured

soloists--it was awesome! It was particularly fun to have them practice together here on Sunday night.

December 29, 2005

[Mom] I am sitting here wondering what to include in this writing since I've missed the last two weeks due to holiday overload. But today feels like things are getting back to normal and we're grateful that we have survived another holiday season. First let me say thanks to all of you for gifts, cards, $$, phone calls, visits, parties, dinners, and any other expressions of love that you shared with us. December proved to be a wonderful month and we feel rejuvenated and revitalized because of the sweet interactions we have enjoyed.

One of the highlights of our month was the ward Christmas party. We had a wonderful response to our invitations and many of the less actives and nonmembers came to the dinner. I took pictures of the children with Santa, and Daddy helped me print them out and distribute them last Sunday. I still have many I took of children who aren't regular attenders and we will be able to deliver them and make another contact with these people. Our weekly visits were equally satisfying. Many of the people we have come to love reciprocated with gifts and treats and we feel that they truly appreciate our efforts to reach out to them.

On Thursday evening we picked up Becky at the airport. As she and the kids came down the escalator, they created quite a stir. Becky had put Santa hats on all of them and it was quite a sight! They were "bouncing off the walls" for most of the evening with excitement but fortunately they all adjusted to the time change and we had a great time! Their visit motivated us to participate in some activities we normally wouldn't have, including the community sleigh ride and live nativity at Jensen's Grove. We also enjoyed our trip to Logan for a Christmas party at Shauntel and Randy's. Steph, Linds, and kids as well as Tim and Emily joined us. It was fun to visit with everyone and to let the cousins have some time together.

Prior to our trip on Saturday, Shauntel offered to keep Maddie and Tate until Monday and then bring them back to Blackfoot and let Archie have a little more time with Larsen and J. Cole. The weather forecast was for clear weather, so Becky agreed and on Monday Shaunnie kept Camille home from school so she could come with them. By the time they arrived, the weather had turned off cold and blustery and we talked Shaunnie into spending the night rather than make the trip in the blizzard. That delay gave us a chance to visit and to have a short home evening with all the grandkids. Daddy used the nativity set and told the Christmas story and it proved to be a sweet time together. Tuesday morning dawned sunny and Shauntel was on her way.

On Saturday the 17th after our return from Logan, we got a babysitter and attended the high school Christmas concert. The last half of the concert was devoted to sacred numbers. The climax of the evening was "The Hallelujah Chorus" from Handel's Messiah. It was so beautiful! I am grateful that we have such wonderful music to enliven and inspire us.

On Thursday we bid Becky and the bunch goodbye. While checking their luggage, the clerk mentioned that the previous day all flights had been cancelled due to the dense fog throughout the area. We were grateful for clear skies and our prayers went with them as they started on their return odyssey to Korea. Although we all agreed that the older the kids get, the easier the trip is, nevertheless it is never easy and usually has plenty of tense moments and upsets. We were grateful to get the phone call letting us know that they had arrived safe and sound 24 hours later.

Tim arrived late Friday night after a long trip from Las Vegas. Tim and Mike had a great time at the bowl game! He also attended the J.S. Commemorative program in the Conference Center with Mike and Marci on Friday night. Later he confessed to us that he was so tired after driving that day from Vegas that he fell asleep during the program and woke up just prior to the closing number. I guess we'll have to check out the video since SaraKay got home late from a skating party and missed part of it too. Daddy and I attended at the stake center. What a fitting finale to a year of celebration for the Prophet's many accomplishments and sacrifices for the Restoration. The year-long emphasis has certainly been a highlight for me and reconfirmed my testimony.

We had a great Christmas and especially enjoyed performing with the ward choir at our sacrament meeting. Following Christmas dinner, we packed up and drove to Grandma Ilene's in Salt Lake. The next day Mike and Marci joined us at Grandma's and then we all went to Don and Deniece's for a family dinner. It was fun to see their beautiful

new home and get a chance to see Abby, Lane and Leslie, Kathy and Dick as well as Don and Deniece, Katie and Lance, Brent, Bradley, Carleen and Carolee. After dinner we said our goodbyes to Mike and Marci and they left for another party and we went to visit Karen and Jim in Layton. It was so nice to spend a couple hours with them. The only disappointment was that we had hoped to visit with Teresa who was leaving today for England and a semester abroad. Daddy was really hoping to share some of his memories of the country with her and also encourage her to be sure to visit some of his favorite sites.

Soon after arriving home Tim broke the news that he and Emily had broken up just before Christmas break. Things just weren't going well and they both felt like it was time to move on. He has seemed alright with it, so we are going with the flow too. Things always seem to work out for the best. His contract with KPMG starts in June and he is planning to make a trip to Boise in the spring and look for housing. Only one semester to go!

We have thoroughly enjoyed having Tim around for this past week. We have had a lot of time for good visiting and catching up on what's happening in his life. He always shares with us some of the information he receives in his program at the Y and it is very interesting and enlightening.

One of the guest speakers that he told us about was a fellow who spoke to them about trends he sees and what advice he would give them as they set out into the world. This fellow said that he felt like Tim's generation are very aware of the stock market and very interested in making investments that will work for them and pay dividends in the years ahead. He offered this advice: Although investing is great, the most important thing a person can do to secure themselves is to get out of debt. Any kind of debt, including home mortgages, etc. He said that getting out of debt could very well be the most important financial decision they will make and that even if interest rates are low, it is crucial to get out from under it and then think about investing. Interesting advice.

Yesterday Mark and Rita dropped in and spent the night with us before leaving for Rexburg this morning. They were going to help with Josh and Jet's two girls while they were at a family wedding in the I.F. Temple (Becky Watson) and then continue to Rexburg where they are making repairs on their rental house between semesters. It has been quite a project for them, but I think they do well with it financially and enjoy it. Mark brought with him a book called "Rich Dads, Poor Dads," and shared some of it with us. It gives tips on what we should teach our families about money.

While we were discussing some of its concepts, Tim mentioned what is called, "the Starbucks effect." Basically, it refers to the habit some people have of spending their money on doodads and things that can be lived without. The advice was to have automatically withdrawn from our paychecks our predetermined savings and then to budget and live on the rest. Instead of using our funds to splurge on a daily $4.00 a cup of coffee at Starbucks (figuratively speaking of course), just learn what are necessities and what are luxuries.

[Dad] It seems like a long time since we have written, but it seems like we have seen so many of you and have enjoyed your letters or blogs that the holidays have really been a sweet time. I still had eight vacation days left that I have been trying to cram into this week between Tuesday and Friday so it has been nice to be able to have some time for Tim and to get my office cleaned out. I have thrown away a lot of stuff that I have hung on to for 30 or 40 years and it feels good. So much information has a relatively short shelf-life that much of my file cabinet full of valuable stuff is junk. With the availability of information over the internet there really is no need to hang on to conference talks, BYU devotionals, and so on.

One of the books I have been reading during the last few days is "Business with Integrity," a compilation of talks and insights from executives and educators shared at BYU. I really liked this anonymous quote: "Our achievements are shaped by the terrain of our lives and the strength of the foundations we set. In building the life we've imagined, we must be true to our beliefs, dare to be ethical, and strive to be honorable. For integrity is the highest ground to which we can aspire." Or another great one was this one from Ronald Reagan in a talk he gave in 1993: "The character that takes command in moments of crucial choices has already been determined by a thousand other choices made earlier at seemingly unimportant moments. It has been determined by all of the seemingly little choices of years past, by all those times when the voice of conscience was at war with the voice of temptation, whispering, aloud or internal, 'It doesn't really matter.'"

Ultimately it does matter. Because of the compounding effect of all the little things we can safely say there are no "little" things, but every little thing is a big thing.

In Loving Memory of

Allan F. Larsen

April 4, 1919 — March 2, 2005
Lower Presto, Idaho — Blackfoot, Idaho

Casket Bearers

Stephen A. Larsen
J. Stafford Larsen
Richard L. Larsen
Gary E. Larsen
Mark E. Larsen
Joel Hebdon
W. Erik Hebdon

Honorary Casket Bearers

Grandsons

Funeral Service

11:00 a.m. Monday, March 7, 2005
Blackfoot West Stake Center
Bishop Robert Anderson, Conducting

Family Prayer — Richard Larsen
Prelude & Postlude — Luann Lake

"The Beatitudes"

Maren Kirwan, vocal solo
Accompanist: Jeanie Gentry

Invocation — Stafford Larsen
Life Sketch — Karen Vanfleet
Speaker — Howard Harrington

"Each Life That Touches Ours For Good"

Stephen, Gary, Stafford, Mark & Richard Larsen
Accompanist: Jeanie Gentry

Speaker — Stephen A. Larsen

"Thy Will Be Done"

Richard Larsen
Accompanist: Aubrey Larsen

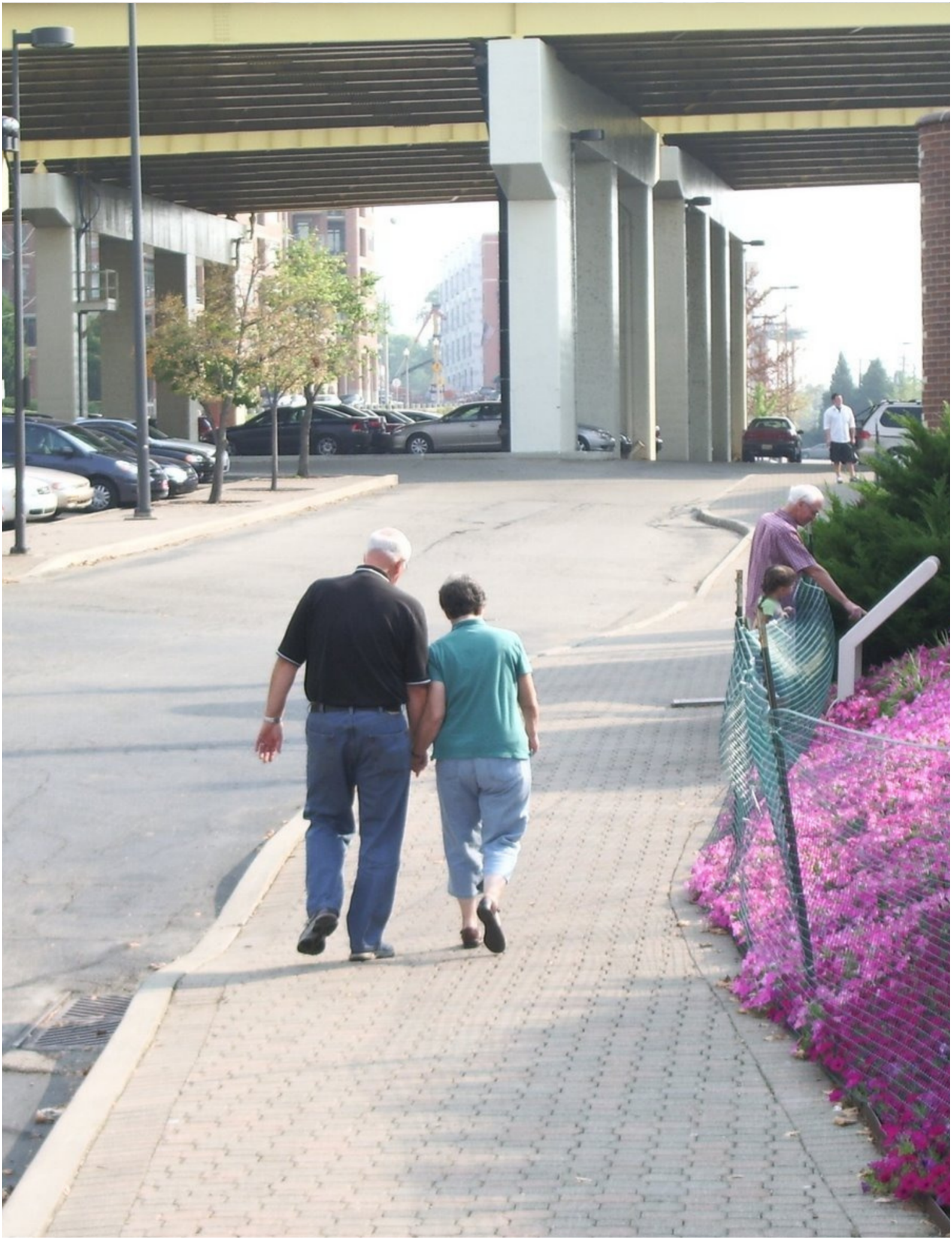
Remarks — Bishop Robert Anderson

"O Divine Redeemer"

Karen Vanfleet, piano
Scott Gentry, organ

Benediction — Mark Larsen
Interment — Riverside-Thomas Cemetery
Dedicatory Prayer — Gary Larsen

TRAILBOSS trek 2004



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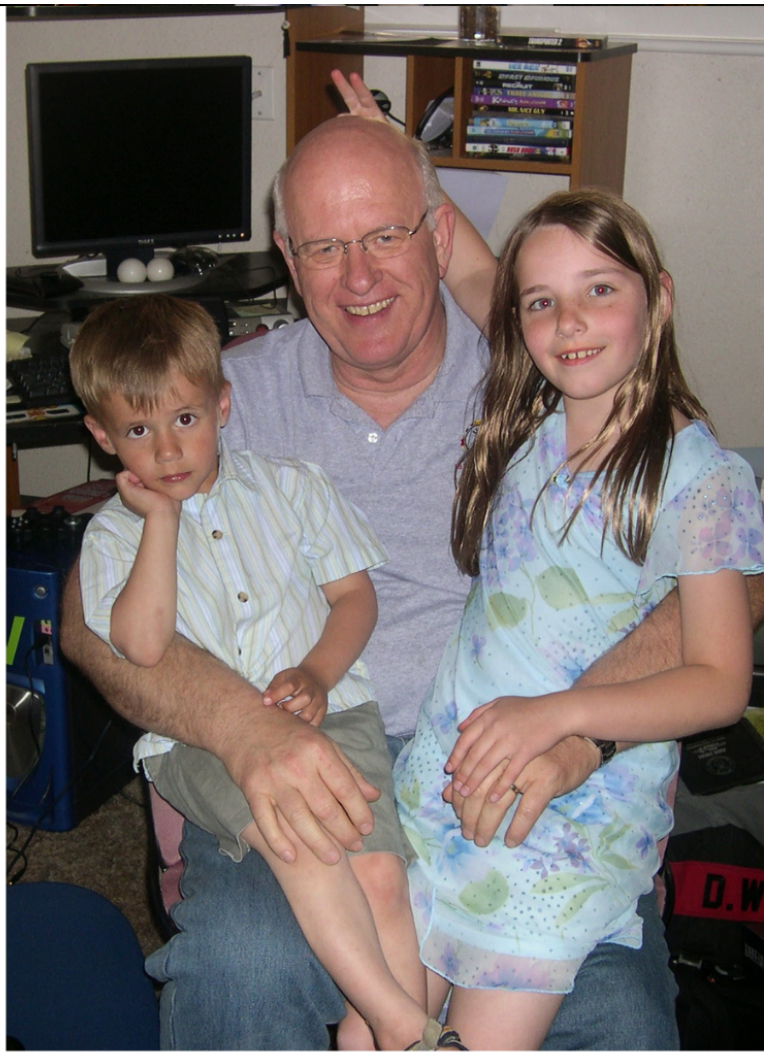

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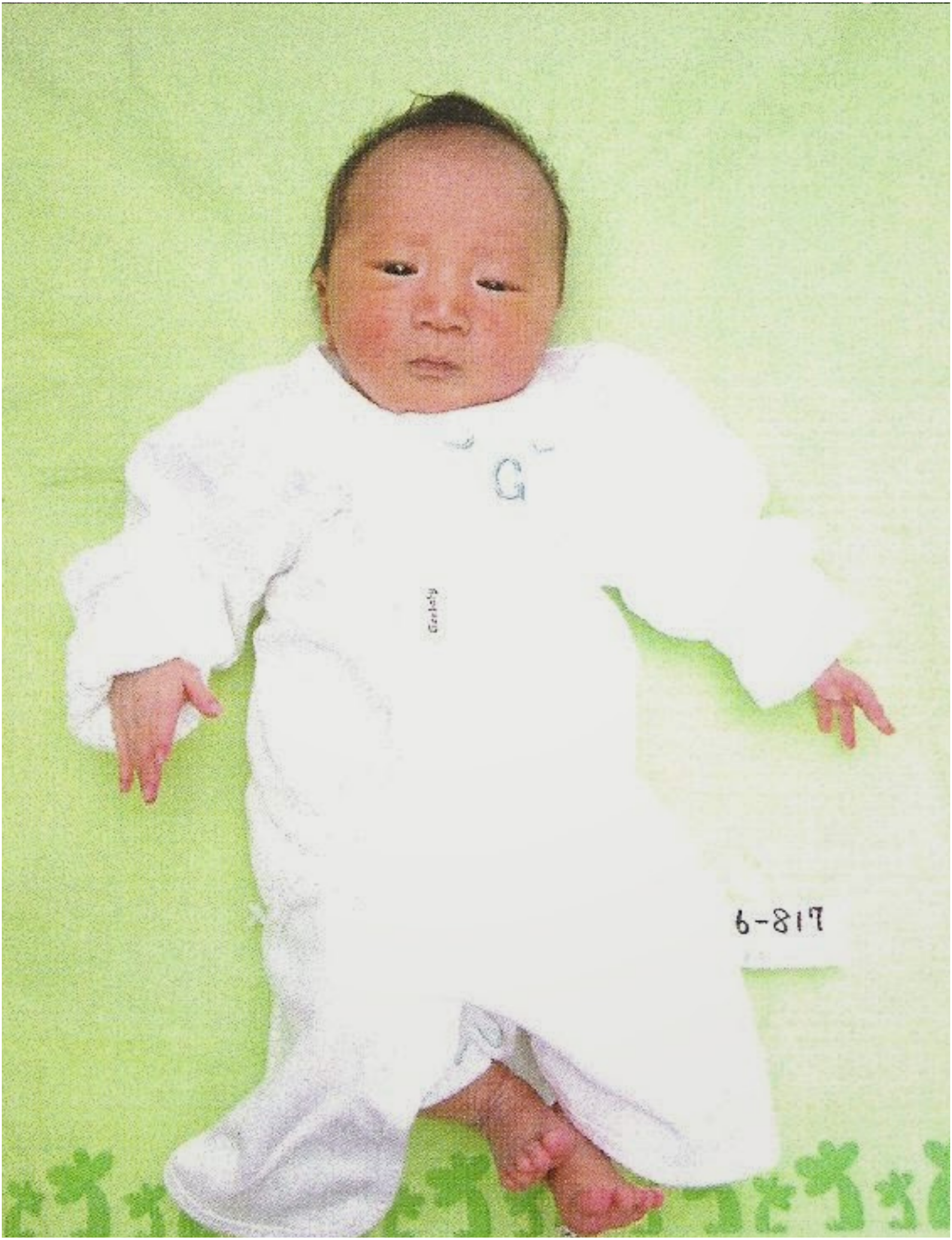
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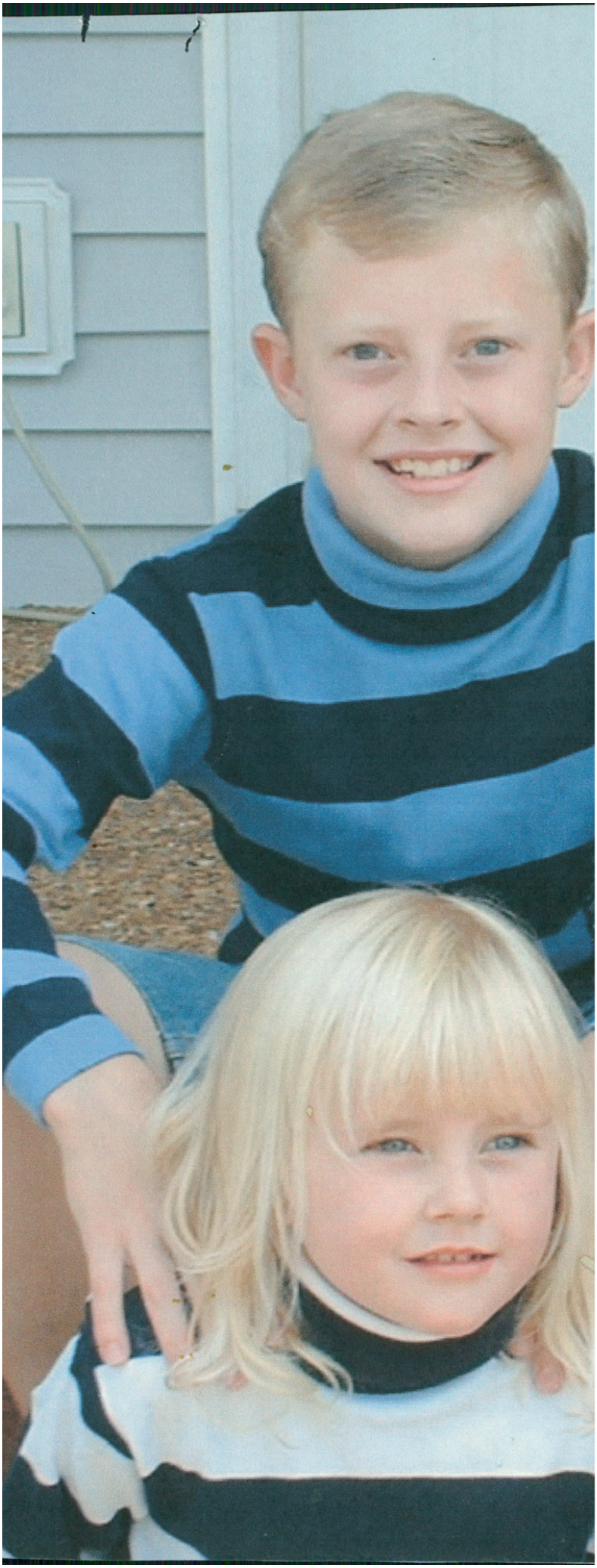

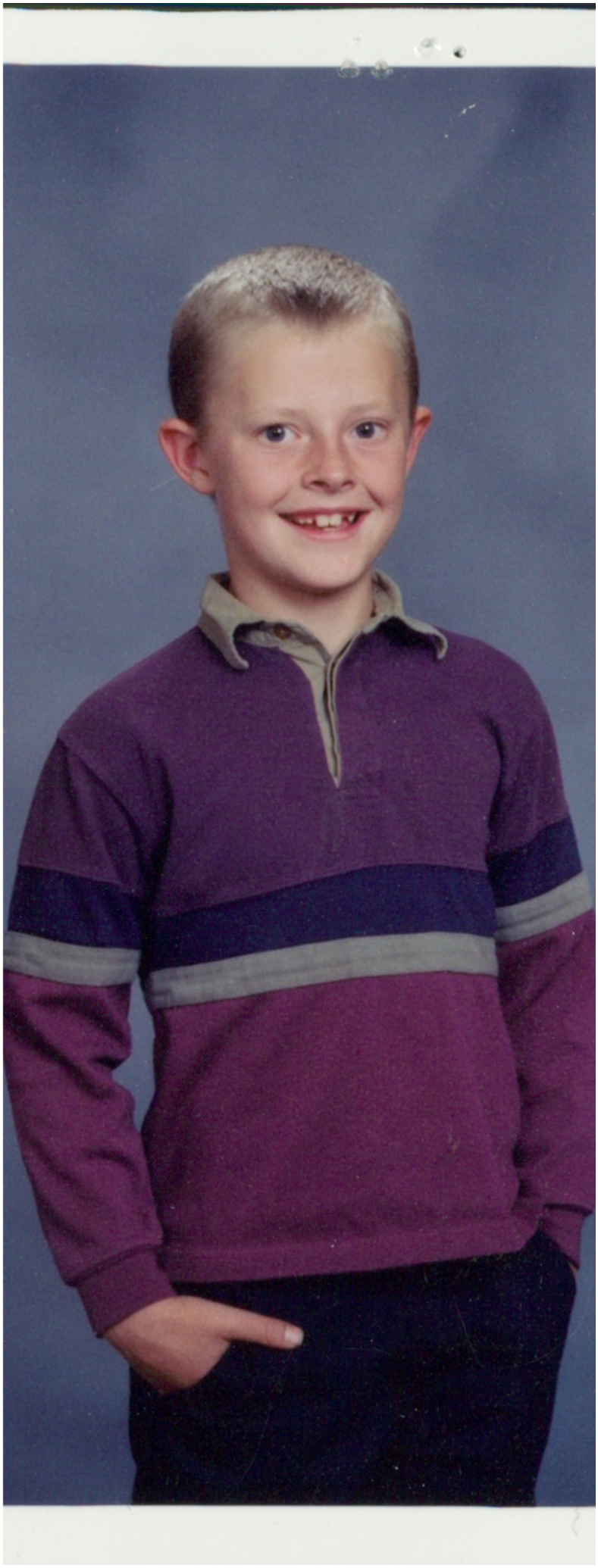

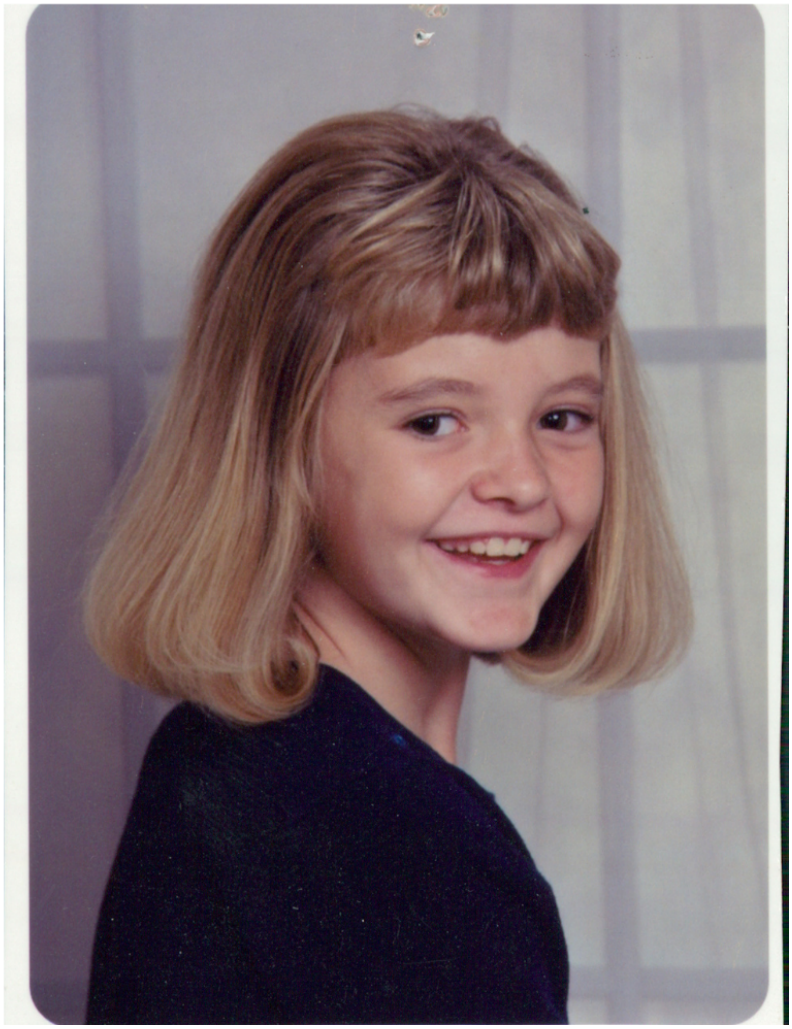

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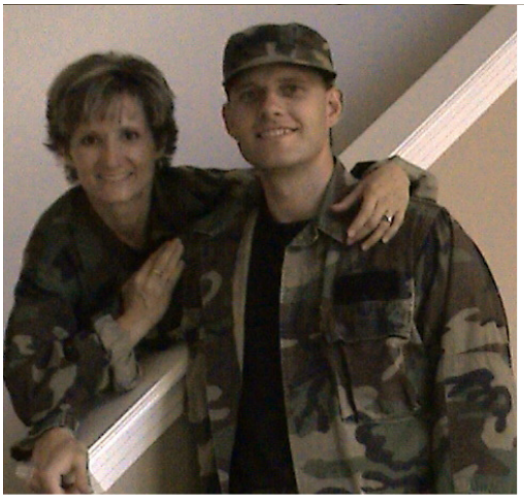

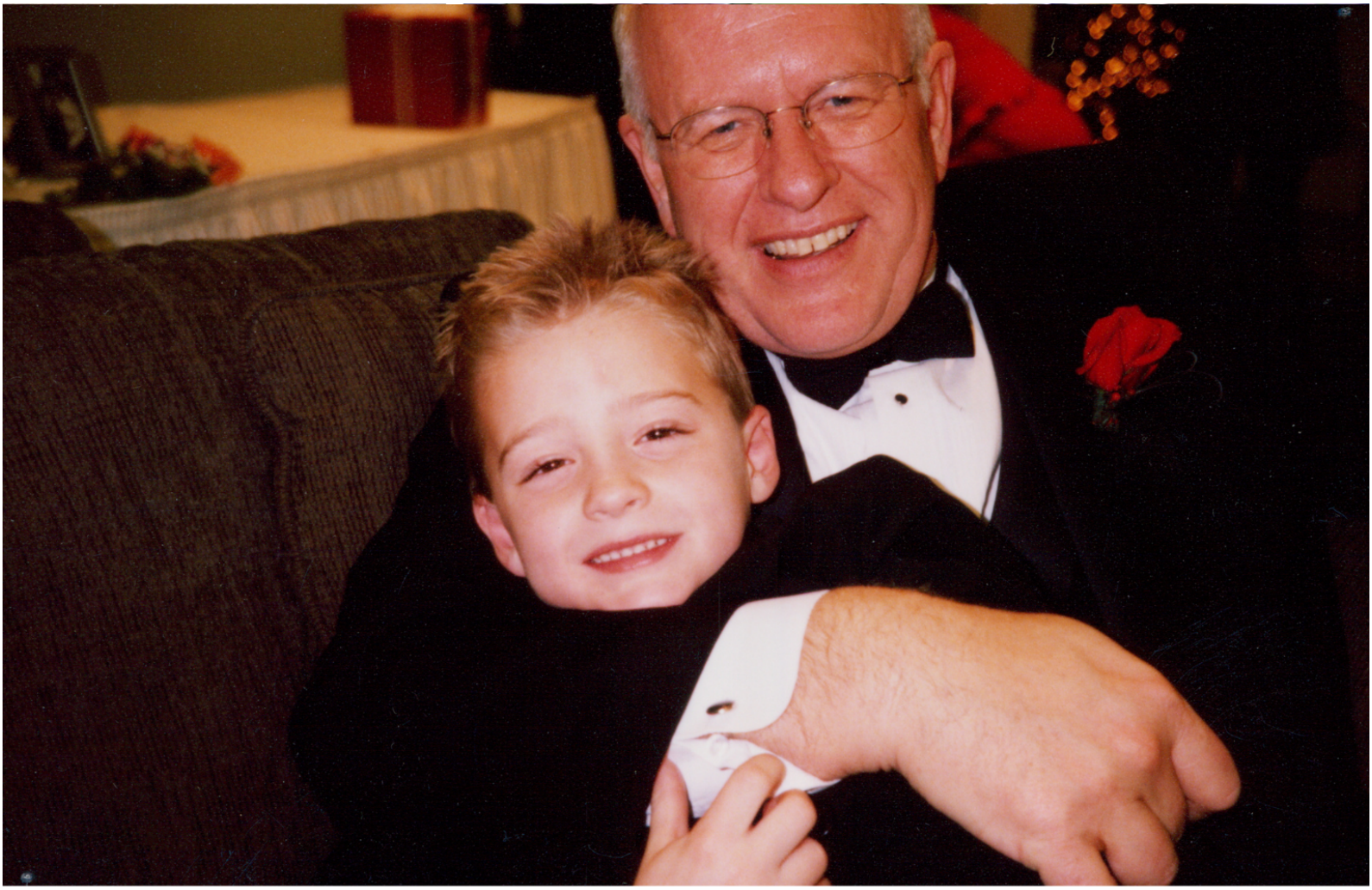

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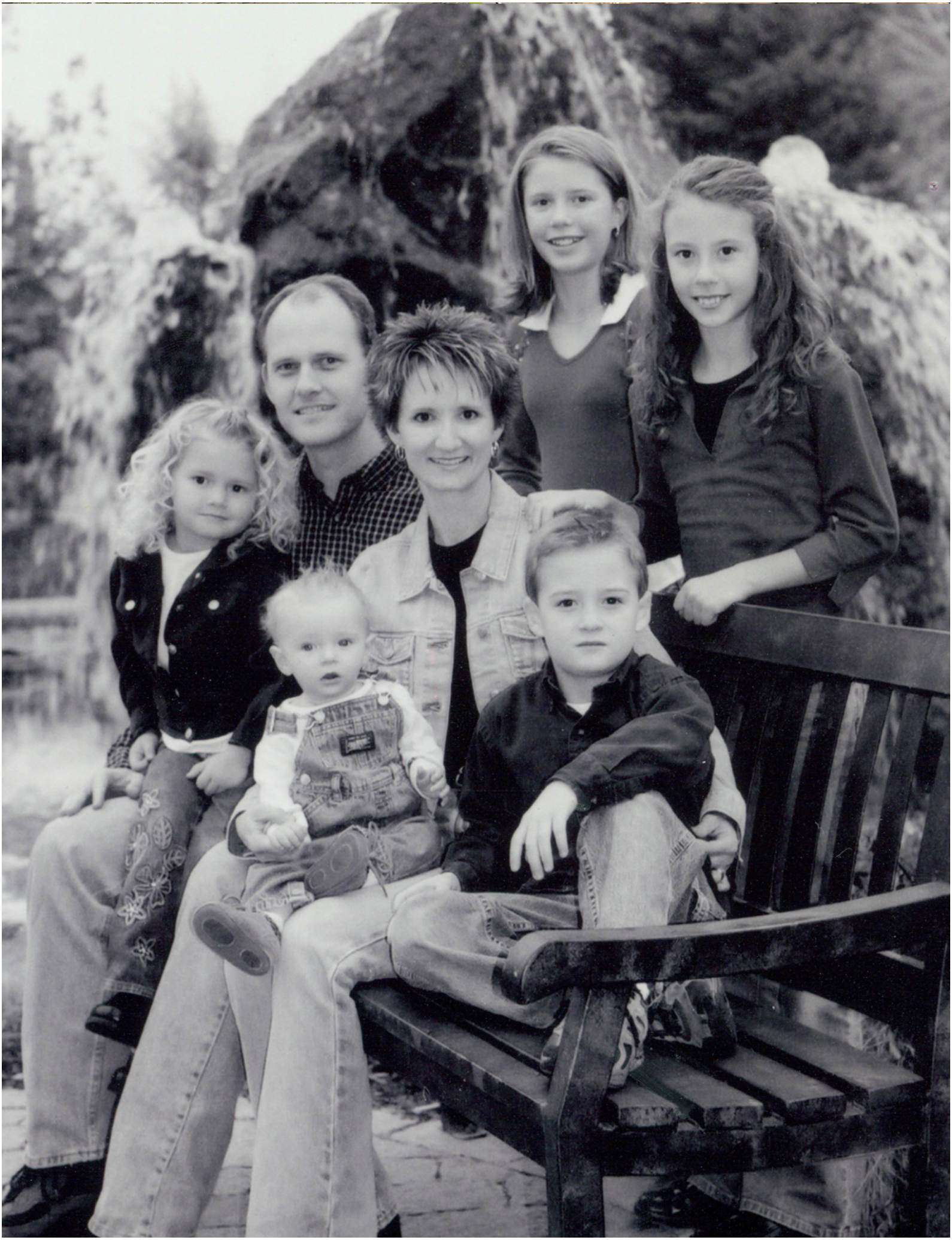

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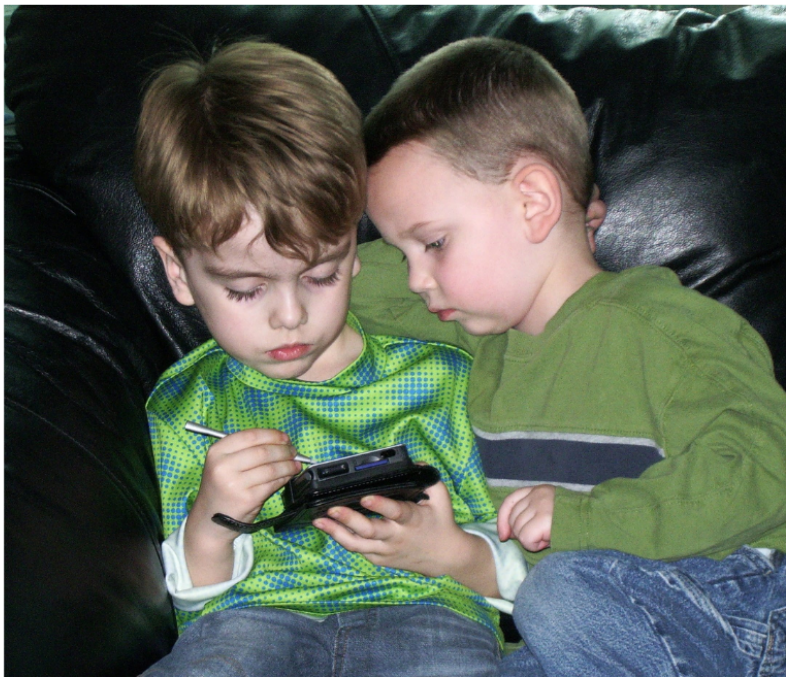

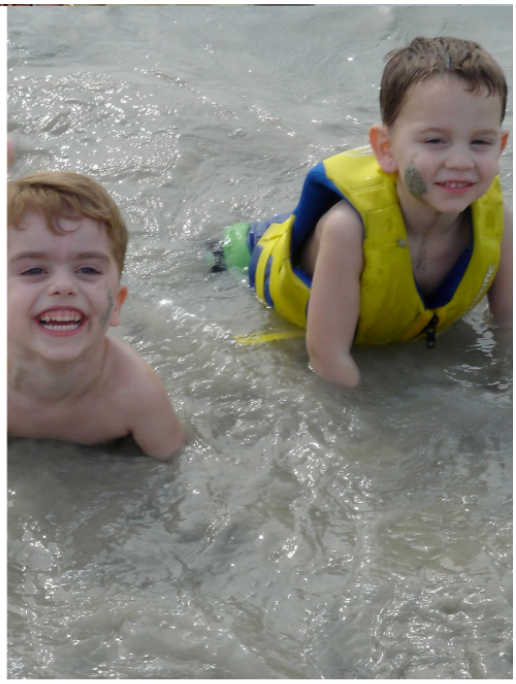

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Struggles to Cope

Larsens Don't Care for Food, Local Opera or Stares; Ford Provides Lots of Perks

A Closet Full of Hormel Cans

By JAMES T. AREDDY

CHONGQING, China—As one of Ford Motor Co.'s managers in China, 30-year-old John Larsen is exposing his family to a culture they couldn't imagine back home in a Michigan suburb.

But when his wife and kids—ages 2, 4 and 6—moved here last September, they preferred to stay inside a 19th-floor Hilton hotel suite, where the family lived for nine months. The rarity of fair-complexioned, American children on the sidewalks of the gritty industrial city of Chongqing makes the Larsen family a crowd-stopping spectacle.

"It's not very fun and my kids hate it," says their mother, Laurel, 31. Over a bowl of her homemade vegetarian chili in the five-star Hilton, the Cincinnati-born woman added, "When we go home and close the door, we feel like we are back in America."

John Larsen

As corporate ambitions bore deeper into China, foreign companies are sending families to less-developed cities like Chongqing. Such places offer huge, untapped markets for companies. They also provide accelerated career opportunities to young executives eager to punch their ticket on the way to upper management. But the postings can feel like a detour into isolation and culture shock for some families.

streets, hungry to earn a few cents lugging stones, machinery or even garbage on their bamboo poles. Residents walk on sidewalks covered in cooking oil and spittle. Even the weather isn't a selling point: Fog trapped in by the surrounding mountains creates generally soupy skies, made worse by pollution.

American companies are drawn to cities like Chongqing because they are cheap; the average annual wage here is $1,500, about half of what it is in Shanghai. Merchandisers see markets for all kinds of products. In Chongqing, for example, car ownership is just 1.3 per 100 people, a fifth of the rate in Beijing.

A tall, confident man with wispy brown hair, Mr. Larsen sees many benefits to the move. He likes his job, developing marketing strategy for Ford. He's glad his children are seeing a different way of life. The private school that the older two kids attend provides an excellent education, he and his wife agree.

Laurel Larsen

Still, the adjustment has been more challenging than they expected. "We thought we would be eating a lot of Chinese food and the kids would be learning Chinese quickly because they'd be immersed," says Mr. Larsen. So far, that hasn't happened.

A marble lobby dominated by a waterfall and piano bar makes the Hilton the swankiest address in this part of China. English is the first language and a concierge takes care of smoothing over any rough spots. A blue-lettered "WELCOME" mat marked the entrance to the Larsen's three-bedroom suite, converted from six guest rooms. It cost $4,300 a month, paid mostly by Ford. When the family needed to step outside, their driver, Jojo, waited in a black

Please Turn to Page A6, Column 2

ord Mondeo sedan, provided by the ompany.

Ford picks up most of the rent for its xpatriate employees and encourages hem to live in hotels because the conveiences help workers "remain focused n running the business," says Ron Tyck, a senior Ford executive in China.

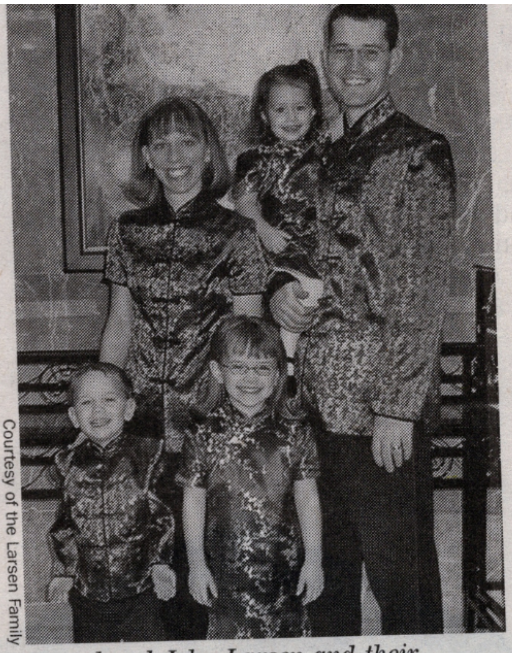
Expat perks are being scaled back in ities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Guanghou and especially Hong Kong, parts f China where rapid development has nade it easier for foreigners to adjust. But perks remain a must to lure Amerians and their families to cities like Chongqing.

Shanghai and Beijing each have a dozen international schools, many with hundreds of students. Chongqing has one international school, in a converted house, with 40 pupils ages 2 to 17. Ten hospitals in Beijing offer foreign-grade medical care. Chongqing has a single Western-style clinic, located in the Hilton, that rotates a different doctor through every few months. Even breathing is easier in Shanghai. Chongqing has 88 fewer days of good-quality air than Shanghai during the average year, according to Chinese government statistics.

Perhaps most shocking: The Starbucks chain, which boasts nearly 100 coffee shops between Beijing and Shanghai, doesn't have one in Chongqing.

In recent years, "the demographics of the expats have changed," says Joseph Verga, a 45-year-old financial controller for Ford, who lives in Chongqing. When he moved here two years ago, "there wasn't a baby" among his U.S. co-workers, he says.

Shortly after Mr. Verga and his 42-year-old wife Marybeth were dispatched to China, they trekked through Tibet. She filled their apartment with paintings from Vietnam and a clay warrior statue from Xian in western China. But after Ms. Verga became pregnant, she decided she didn't want to go to a Chinese hospital. So



Courtesy of the Larsen Family

Laurel and John Larsen and their children, James, 4 years old, Emma, 6, (standing) and Eliza, 2, held by her father, wear Chinese-style clothes made by a local tailor.

this spring, two months before her due date, she flew home to Detroit to give birth to her son in a U.S. hospital. "There's not one thing that's the same," about Chongqing and the U.S., she says.

Before Ford started making cars here in 2003, the city—familiar overseas as "Chungking"—hadn't seen so much foreign attention since serving as an allied supply post in World War II. Decaying hillside mansions are a reminder that Chongqing was a capital for the Nationalist government before the civil war that brought communists to power in 1949. Today Chongqing is the main jumping-off point for tourist cruises on the Yangtze River toward the famed Three Gorges Dam.

The government is eager to boost inter-

just 5% of the $3 billion of foreign-in-
vestment that Shanghai takes in annually.

The first time either of the Larsens saw China was when Ford flew them to Chongqing last summer for a visit after his job offer. The couple, who have been married eight years, realized they would be in for a big change. But there was never really much debate whether he would take the job. Ms. Larsen jokes that she knew that in accepting his marriage proposal she was also agreeing to someday follow him to China.

Her husband caught the China bug after being assigned by the Mormon Church to do missionary work in Taiwan at age 19. While there, he learned to speak and read Chinese. Today he speaks Mandarin Chinese well enough to conduct business meetings. Before moving to China, Ms. Larsen's international experience consisted of living in London for 18 months and a vacation to Cancún, Mexico.

Like many foreigners in town, Ms. Larsen says she won't touch Chongqing's signature cuisine: "huoguo," or hot pot—a fondue-like dish so loaded with fiery chilies that its aroma seems permanently suspended in Chongqing's air, along with diesel fumes. Supermarkets feature chicken feet jutting out of crushed ice and slabs of pork dangling from sharp hooks.

Neatly dressed in slacks, a black argyle V-neck and bright white blouse, Ms. Larsen shows off her solution to the food challenge: A closet full of cans, stacked to the ceiling, with labels like Green Giant, Crisco and Hormel—items lugged to Chongqing in suitcases or mailed from overseas. Her birthday present in February was a silver, side-by-side U.S.-sized refrigerator-freezer.

Food is a bargain in Chongqing. Ms. Larsen spends only $50 to $100 a week on groceries, compared with $200 to $300 in Michigan. With the help of her small network of expat wives, she has found one store that has Oreo cookies and another that stocks Fruit Loops cereal and canned refried beans. The children see little in the markets that resembles the food they remember back home. Ms. Larsen says they don't give her much sass when she tells them: "here's what you're eating."

Recently, the Larsens faced an important new food complication. Four-year-old James was diagnosed with celiac disease during the family's summer visit back to the U.S. The boy now needs a diet free of gluten, which is found in wheat. In the U.S., Ms. Larsen prepared two cartons of special wheat-free foods to take back to Chongqing.

Entertainment in Chongqing is hard to find, the Larsens say. At a drive-through "safari park," the children looked through car windows and watched tigers devour live chickens tossed from a ranger's jeep. Enthusiasm about visiting pandas was

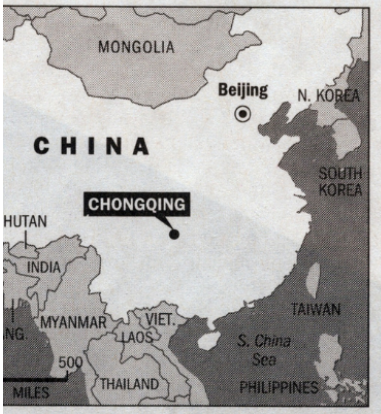
me. Tickets cost only $2, but the family, impressed, left at intermission.

One pastime Ms. Larsen has designed r 2-year-old Eliza is spotting dogs near e Hilton hotel. A look down an alley found animals one Tuesday. After an hour, the tle girl had glimpsed two mutts. "He's go- g to his house," Eliza said as a scruffy own dog jostled along a sidewalk owded with scaffolding equipment.

Chinese men and women made way r the tot to amble down on the side- alk. Nearly everyone reacted to the re sight of a foreign child, pointing, ggling, staring and sometimes touch- g her. "Eliza's kind of like the monkey show," her mother said.

Ms. Larsen and her daughter took a ute back to the Hilton over a pedestrian idge, where merchants sell sunglasses, mbs and belts. One woman's habit is to rust a mirror into the little girl's hand ch time they pass, Ms. Larsen says. She ys she feels obligated to buy it, even ough she is tiring of the routine. At first, e woman asked only one yuan for a mir- r, Ms. Larsen says, but now she charges ght yuan, about 99 cents, for each one.

As Ms. Larsen settled up, a middle- ed man bent down for a closer look at iza, while a bang-bang man leaned on s bamboo stick and watched. An elderly



sserby gave Eliza's cheek a quick pinch. eryone tried to be friendly, but Eliza, un- iling, said nothing. She kept her head wn, eyes fixed on the new mirror.

Foreigners are such a rarity in Chong- g that even Ms. Larsen gawks at nes: "There's a Westerner we don't ow," she says, on one drive through wn. Only about 25 of Ford's 2,500 em- yees in Chongqing are foreigners. The rsens say they know literally every ex- t family living here.

Ms. Larsen says she hasn't learned ough Chinese in her two hours of weekly sons to make even basic points to the nily baby sitter. She often calls her hus- nd on the cellphone to seek translation lp. Looking over the skyscrapers out- le the hotel window, she says, "Real life happening out there, and I'm not con- cted." Even so, she adds, "What would I out there?"

Her offer to volunteer at an orphanage s turned down, she says. Her major di- rsion is teaching two Pilates-style exer- e classes each week for expat women, s dance classes for little girls. Instead paying her, a few dollars are collected per class for a local school for the blind.

A centerpiece of expat social life is a Wednesday "ladies' lunch," where fund are raised for the blind school and new is swapped about which store has tac shells or sour cream. The women mak visits to the fabric market, using calcula tors to bargain, then use gestures t show a tailor what they want made.

While she hasn't made friends with lo cals, Ms. Larsen says she values her nev expat friends. They are people who simpl wouldn't be in her orbit back home, sh says, including a woman from Cuba and a woman closer to her mother's age.

From the Hilton, every morning a whit van picked up the older two children Emma and James, for the 20-minute driv to the place in China they enjoy most school. Ms. Larsen prizes the 7-to-1 student teacher ratio at the Yew Chung Interna tional School, which Ford covers at an an nual cost of $13,000 per child.

National flags wrap along the ceilin of Yew Chung School. Children from a dozen countries sit shoulder-to-shoulde at little desks. Emma's class groups 5-, 6 and 7-year-olds. She studies Chines each day and practices with her father a night. She is reading English above he U.S. grade level.

"I think I'm going to be a snob when I g home and walk into the public school," Ms Larsen says. "They go a lot faster [here]."

With two years still to go on their assign ment, the Larsens recently decided t move out of the Hilton and into a five-bed room house in a new gated community de signed for expatriates. Ford pays almost al of the rent. The couple say they want thei kids to have a more "American" experi ence, in particular a yard to play in and th responsibility to clean it up. There's also a local pool and a playground in the area.

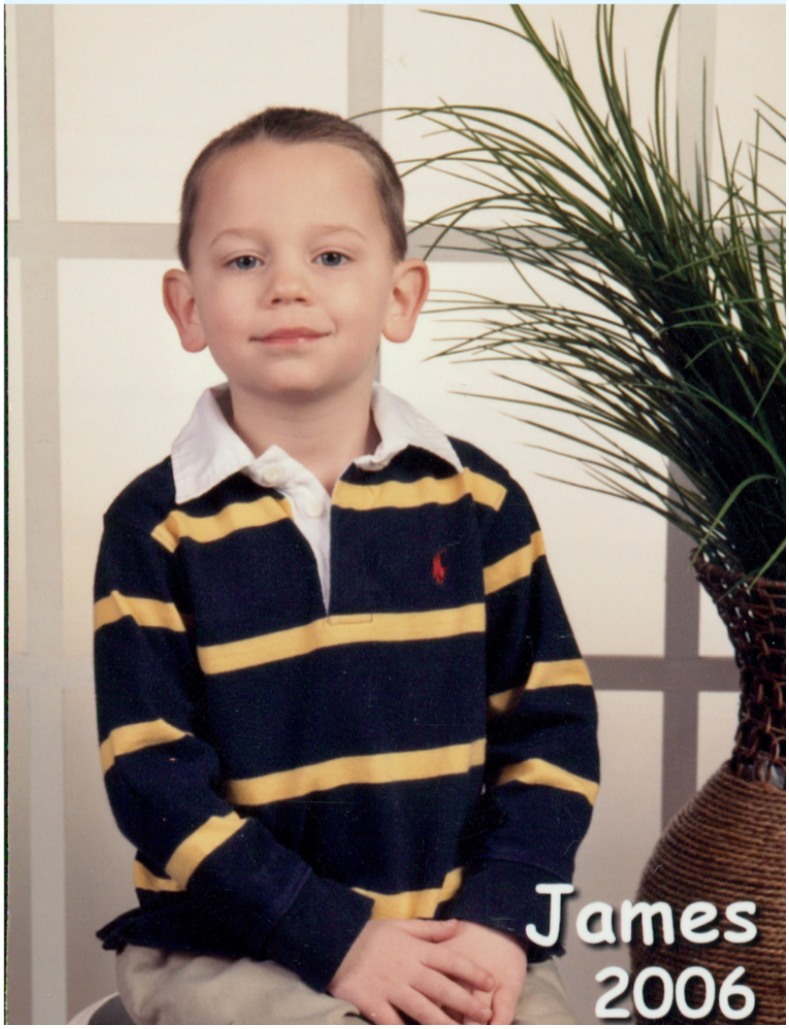
Mr. Larsen has recently needed t spend part of each week at Ford's new plant in Nanjing, several hours away b plane, near China's east coast. Ms. Larse says his absences sharpen the isolation sh feels in the new house, away from the help ful, English-speaking Hilton staff. But sh says she accepts that her husband's new as signment is a sign of his value to Ford.

The Larsens credit life in Chongqin with deepening their family ties. "We have to be friends with each other," Mr Larsen says. They have taken trips t Thailand and South Korea, and mad plans to visit Bali and Hong Kong's new Disneyland. Ms. Larsen says she als trying to get out of urban Chongqin more on weekends, going to places such as parks around the mountainous region

But they are always aware how far the are from home. Mr. and Ms. Larsen re turned from dinner one evening to a find a poem from their 6-year-old daughte Emma, complete with a child's misspell ings, taped to their bed-stand. It read:

Amarica is my place!
I love Amarica.
It was fun.
It was so fun.
I miss it.
I miss my frieds.
I love Amarica.

Amarica was my place and it still i my place.



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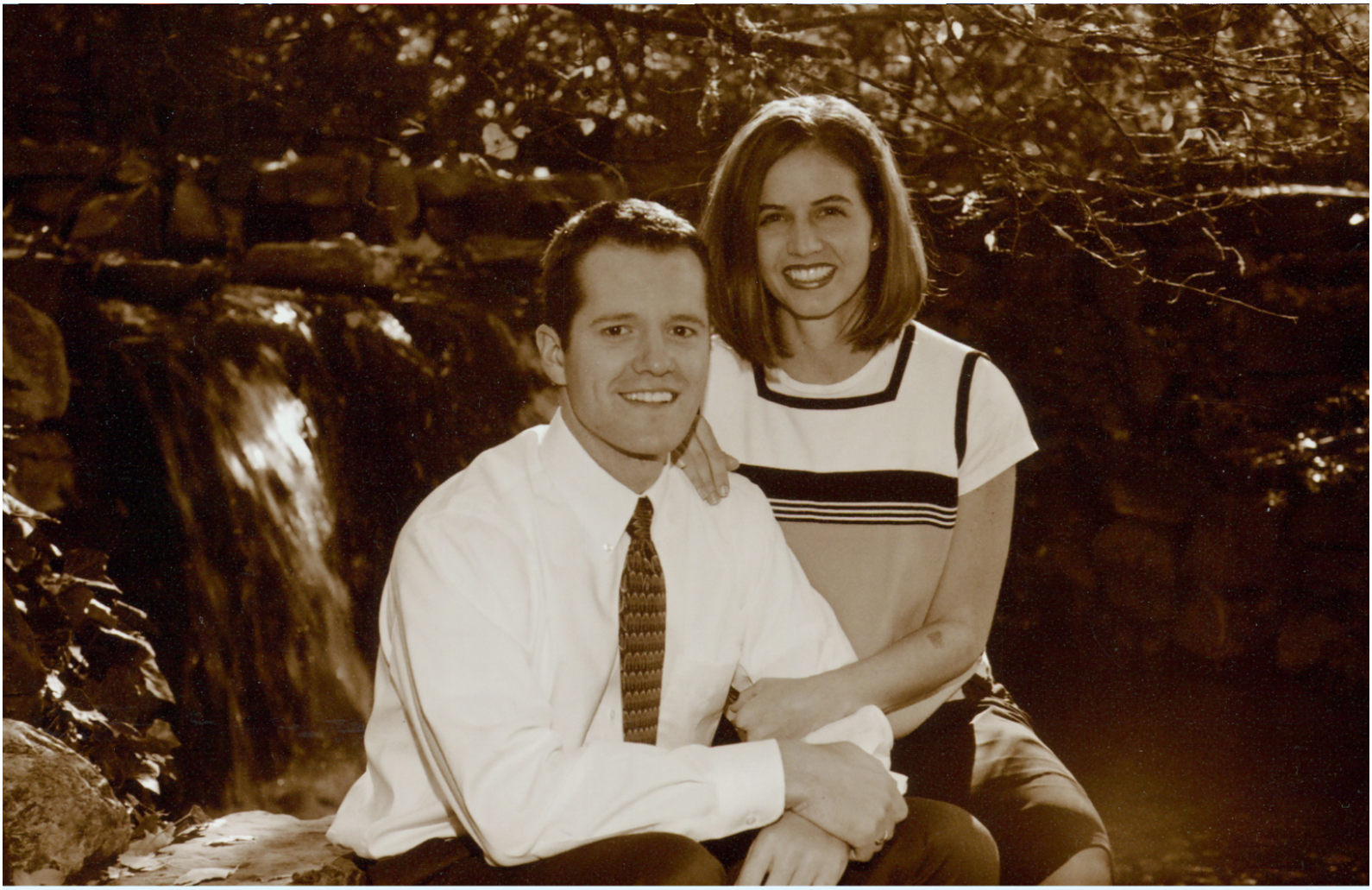

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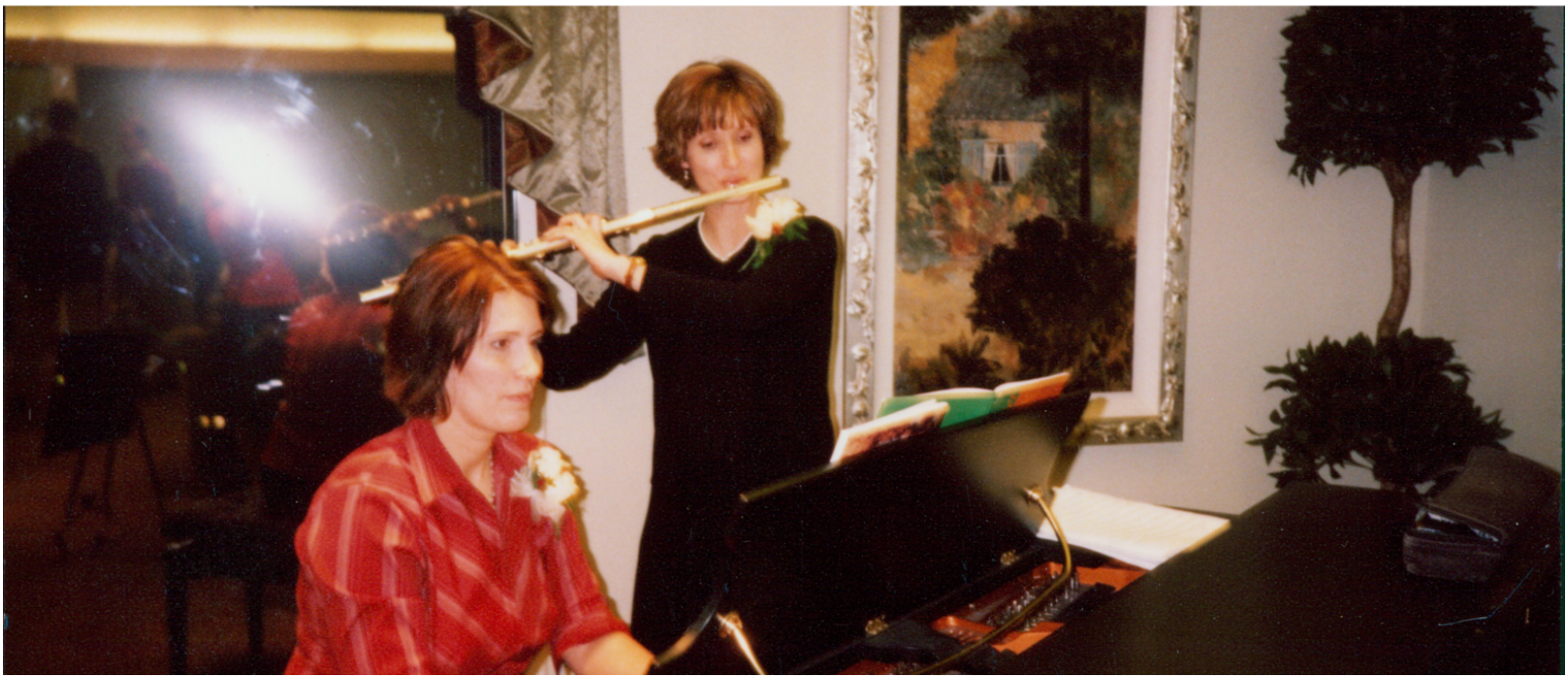

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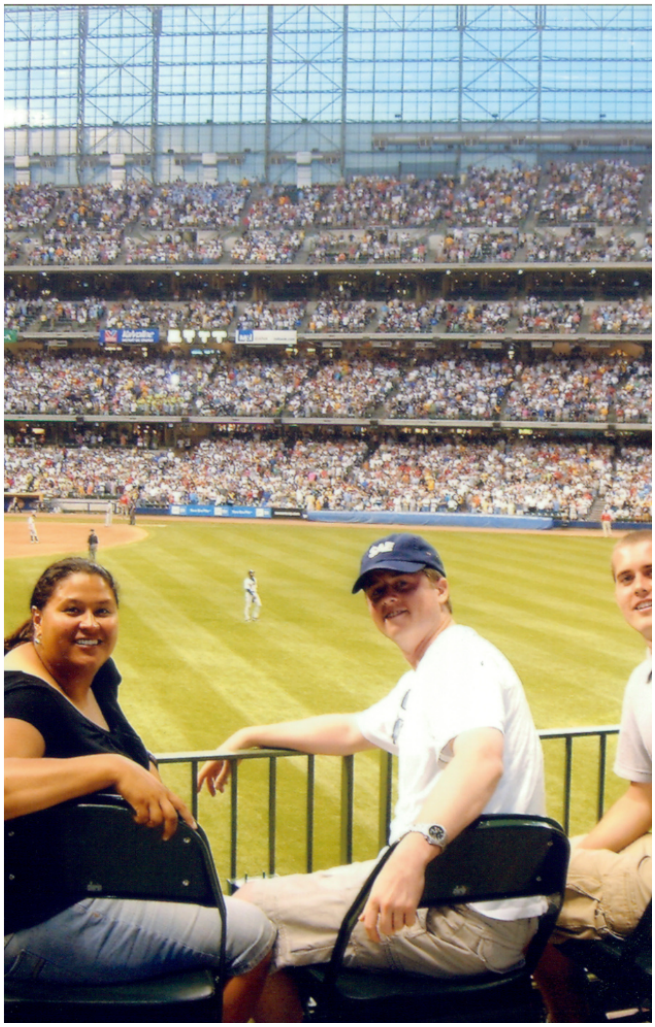

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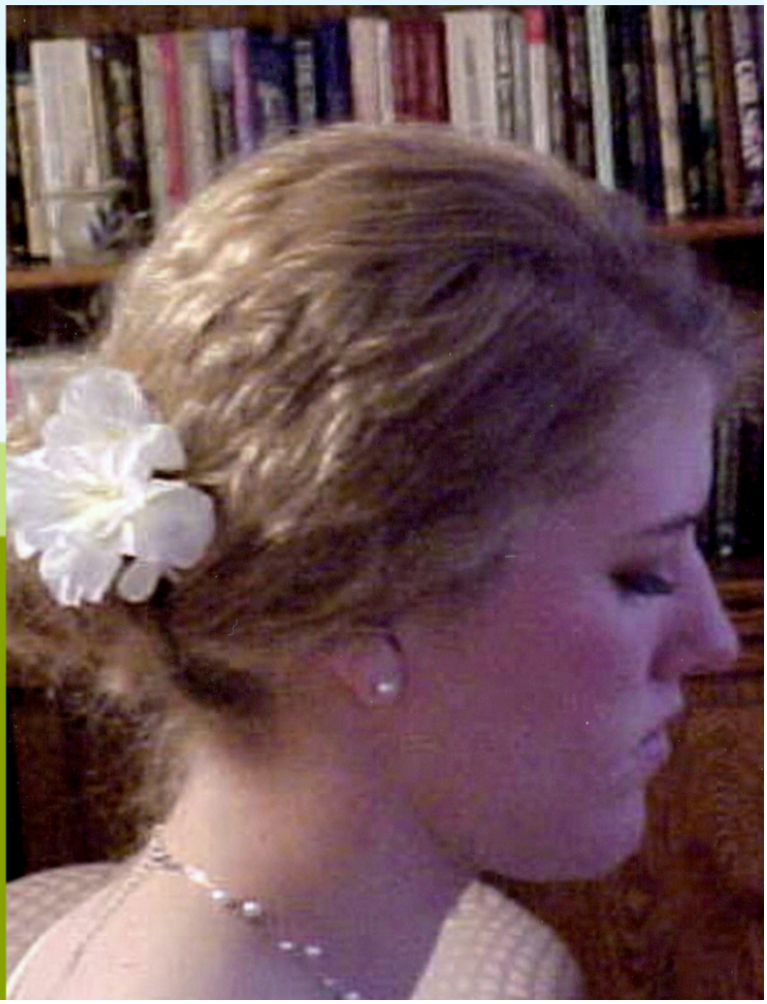

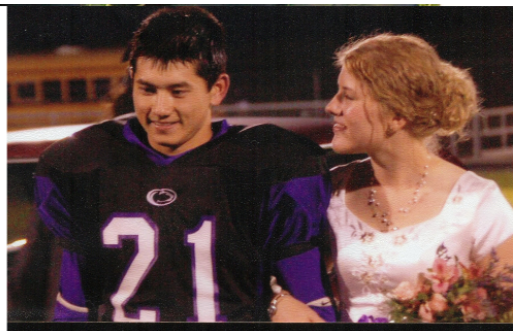
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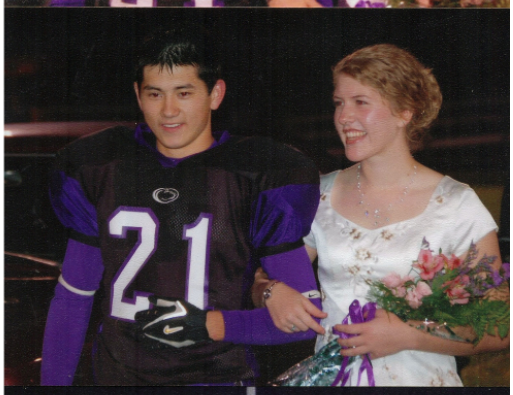
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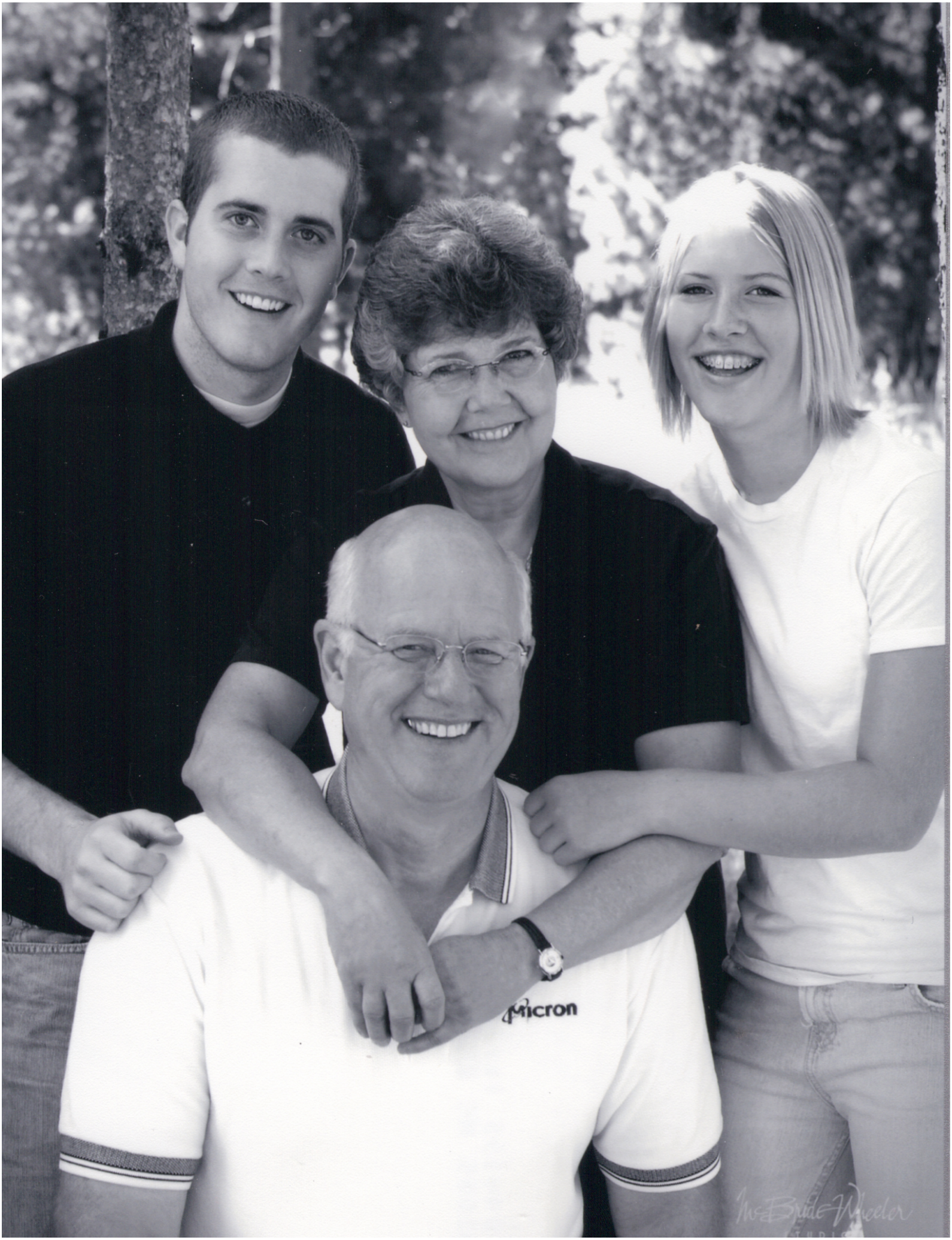
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STUDIOS

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Photo by Bill Wiener

2006

January 3, 2006

[Mom] Happy New Year! Hopefully you are ready to get back into the routine and have had your fill of the holidays. We had such a great month with hearing from everyone, seeing many of you, and having a little down time to sleep in and get some cleaning and organizing done. Tim was with us from the 23rd until the 31st when he went to Logan to spend New Year's Eve with the families there. He spent a lot of time while he was here going through his bedroom closets and the storage room and working on his upcoming CPA test. We tried to make being home a pleasant experience for him because we are hoping that when he graduates in April that he will choose to come home for a month before starting into his job in Boise. He has a lot of studying to do in preparation for the exam and we have a relatively quiet household these days. He commented on how quiet it seemed compared to his apartment in Provo with all the comings and goings. I reminded him that there is also free room and board and wonderful conversation whenever he needs a break.

He has been making some contacts in Boise regarding housing and also has been checking on the website for realtor listings in case he decides to buy. SaraKay mentioned this morning that she misses having him around even though most of the time he was doing his own thing and studying. It felt good to us, too.

We are meeting tonight with the other missionary couples in our ward and going to set goals for the new year. It was nice to have some time in December when we could take a break from our duties, but we know we have got to be consistent with these families that we are working with if we are going to see results. I can't remember if I mentioned in my last letter about my friend, Donna Jess. I was assigned as her V.T. and we had an immediate bond. The first time I met her she was babysitting her six-year-old granddaughter and the whole time we were talking about the church and her inactivity, her little granddaughter was cuddled up next to her, listening intently. I had the distinct impression that Donna was setting the course for this little girl's future and that her attitudes toward the church would be mirrored in Kylee's life. That impression was so strong that each month that I visited her I kept prodding her to put her fears and disappointments aside and get active.

Well, Kylee started asking Donna all kinds of questions about God and heaven and Donna could see that she needed answers. (Kylee has been very fragile since birth and several times they have almost lost her). About the same time this began to happen, Donna's brother, Gordon, started feeling like he should start coming again, and so together they started attending our meetings, bringing Kylee with them. Gordon went south for the winter but Donna continued coming and enjoyed it. The ward opened their arms to her and Kylee and last week on the Christmas program, Kylee marched right up to the front with the other Primary children and sang songs.

When I visited Donna just before Christmas, she told me of an interesting experience she had with her daughter (Kylee's mother) who has also been inactive since her high school years. Her daughter had a dream and Gordon's deceased wife came to her and told her that she needed to get active in the church. She had the same dream twice and it impressed her that her aunt would care enough to get this message to her.

Well, as Donna was tearfully telling me about this experience, I was so happy! We have worked very hard with her for many months and it was a sweet thing to know that we were receiving help from the other side! What a testimony to Donna of the Lord's tender watch care over her and her family and of their value to Him! It also gave me renewed energy to continue on with our contacts and not lose heart when some of these people seem so difficult to reach. We have to keep hanging on to President Jenks' promise that if we do the work, the miracles will follow. It pleases me to know that all of you are also involved in your wards and stakes and doing your share to build Zion. My church work over the years has been a great source of satisfaction and joy and I feel that I have been so blessed for it.

This morning at 5:30 SaraKay and I headed out in a snow storm for her piano lessons. The weather conditions were so treacherous that we gave ourselves plenty of time and just creeped along. We were driving through Rockford going about 40 mph and all at once the car started sliding and we turned 360 degrees, kept sliding and ended up in the strip of ground between the highway and the road that goes past where Harrington's used to live. It was so terrifying for both of us! I thought we were going to crash into a

pole or into the cars parked at the Rockford Service and I felt totally helpless just hanging on for dear life until the car came to a stop. Fortunately, we weren't stuck and we just drove back onto the highway and continued on. It was very frightening and SaraKay commented that it was "a wake-up call" for her to realize how easily things can go wrong on slick roads. Thank goodness we were the only ones on the road or it could have been fatal.

On Thursday I will be going in for my surgery. I need to be at the hospital by 9:20 and the surgery will be at 1:30. Daddy will take me and spend the day doing work out of the Idaho Falls office until he meets with the doctor about 2:30. We are optimistic about this and ask for your prayers on my behalf. Hopefully all will go well.

[Dad] Amen to all of the above! We just had a phone call from Staff--his wife Kathy had surgery last week and has had some complications and infection and her kidneys have shut down. She could use the faith and prayers of the family also. There is so much power when we all unite our prayers!!

At Rotary today, the song I chose to lead everyone in was, "Let There Be Peace On Earth." Some of you may not know the words, but it is a great message of peace and letting that peace begin with me. That is my wish for each of you for this new year--that you may enjoy peace and harmony in your lives and families.

Somerset Maugham wrote: "It's a funny thing about life; if you refuse to accept anything but the best, you very often get it." The Reverend Canon Dalton Downs said: "In the final analysis, religion is not about what you believe. It is about what you do." Mark Twain said, "Always do right. This will surprise some people and astonish the rest." And finally, the words of a Hindu proverb, "There is nothing noble in being superior to some other man. The true nobility is being superior to your previous self."

January 9, 2006

[Mom] As most of you know, Staff's wife, Kathy, passed away Sunday morning after a struggle with her organs shutting down as the result of a perforated ulcer. Fortunately, all of the children were able to be with her for the last couple of days except for Matt who arrived just shortly before her passing. It came as such a shock to all of us. We so appreciated the emails from Staff and Jennifer those last few days.

I spent part of yesterday on the phone with Jennifer. Staff's son, Jimmy, works for Southwest Airlines and got bereavement airline tickets for Staff's siblings. Jennifer did a lot of the leg work and before the day was over, she had lined up flights for Daddy, Karen, Gary, and Rick. We haven't been involved with Mark's arrangements but we are assuming he, too, may be flying in. We really appreciated all their efforts to help the family get there.

Because Staff and Kathy have lived in California for only a couple months, the decision was made to have the funeral in their old ward in Gilbert. Another advantage of AZ was that Kathy has a lot of her side of the family from that area although her mother and one sister presently live in SLC, another sister in Illinois, and another in Texas. Jennifer and family also live there at the present time and their home will accommodate Staff's family during the days before and after the services. My sister, Lisa, will have Daddy and Karen stay Friday night with her. Their flight doesn't arrive until 11:30 p.m. so it will be a short stay, but much appreciated. Gary, Linda, and Emily are all going to attend and will be able to stay with a dear friend of Emily's.

It just doesn't seem possible that Kathy is gone. I'm sure Staff will have some major decisions to make in the months ahead. Last night while we were doing dishes, SaraKay asked me, "What is harder; to lose a child or a spouse?" Having never lost either, I could only tell her what I had heard from others. Someone told me that losing a child is heartbreaking and you never get over the sorrow but losing a spouse turns your life upside down and requires more of an adjustment. Whatever the case, I'm sure it is one of life's most difficult challenges and one we can't completely understand until you've experienced it. Thank you to you who wrote them notes of condolences.

I am feeling stronger every day and grateful to have a quiet situation here at home. I have a lot of low impact projects that need attention and so I've kept busy in between naps. (Sounds like a tough life, doesn't it!)

[Dad] Yesterday was a very full all-day staff meeting in Idaho Falls. I was sorry to leave Sue here alone with all the phone calls. I tried to get things arranged Sunday night with calls to all my siblings, coordinating the floral arrangement, etc. But Sue ended up with about 100 phone

calls and was not able to rest all day and it was one of the worst days for her. But things settled down today and were much more tolerable.

Thursday morning I am scheduled for my annual review which should be pretty good based on achievements for 2005. The council as a whole really hit big with membership and unit numbers as well as FOS. It is a lot easier to hit all our goals when we have a full, trained staff.

January 18, 2006

[Mom] On Sunday night John and Laurel called with the news regarding Baby Tessa. What a difficult turn of events for them! When I received Laurel's letter yesterday telling of the ultrasound results, her feelings and fears, and the uncertainty of the situation, I had a good cry. I had been pretty emotional all day thinking about them and when the letter came, it was so beautifully expressed that I couldn't keep the tears from flowing. I called Grandma Ilene and visited with her about it and I could feel her loving concern and thought how comforting to feel the love of extended family at a time like this. I know that not only are we praying for Baby Tessa but there is one Grandma Barbara and two Grandpas (Allan and Arch) who are aware of this unfolding drama and may even play a part in it.

Before John and Laurel left for China, Daddy gave them father's blessings and I particularly remember him telling John that they would in their hour of need receive help from both sides of the veil. That's a comforting thought. We extend our faith and prayers to John and Laurel as she undergoes further testing in Hong Kong this week. They will be staying at the Empire Hotel until Saturday night. Remember them in your prayers.

I thought I would like to include some of the information about the two funerals that Daddy attended this past week. The first was for Aunt Kathy in Phoenix. Because of Jimmy's connections with Southwest, Staff got plane tickets for his siblings to make the trip for the funeral. It was very good of him to go to bat for the tickets since despite Dad's best efforts he couldn't find them for less than $200 out of SLC; most of the siblings didn't feel like they had the time to drive it.

Daddy met at Karen's on Friday night and they flew together. Rick was supposed to meet them but became sick with the flu and returned home. Daddy and Karen stayed with Lisa and Don; we appreciated their hospitality. They arrived in Phoenix about 11:30 and got to Lisa's a little after midnight. They visited and then got to bed by about 2.

By 8:30 a.m. they were at the chapel to practice a musical number for the program, "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing." Those singing were Dad, Gary, Jeanie, Mark, and Karen. Uncle Scott was at the piano. Daddy said that they received many, many compliments on the song. What a treat for the family to be able to do that together! The program was beautiful and well attended, especially because Kathy has so much extended family in the area and they have been so good to them over the years.

All of the children (Jenn, Matt, Chris, Coco, and Jimmy) attended with their spouses. During the program each of the kids expressed some sweet memories of their mother. The whole day was very sweet and a time of rejoicing for family, the gospel, and precious relationships. Daddy and Karen arrived back at the SLC airport at about 10 p.m. and Daddy drove home in a snowstorm and arrived here at about 1:30 a.m. I was still awake, worrying about him falling asleep or having some mishap. Anyway, it was a relief to have him arrive safe and sound and to know that everything went so well. Several have asked regarding his future plans. Daddy thinks he will return to California and keep doing what he's doing for a while and then make some decisions after he has had time to catch his breath. Thanks to several of you who wrote notes of sympathy. He was very touched by your loving concern.

I was unable to attend the funeral for Uncle Bim, (James Berkeley Larsen, Jr.) who passed away last week. Now Grandpa Larsen has only two surviving siblings. It doesn't seem possible that the whole family is about gone. Although we haven't had a lot of interaction with Bim since he lived most of his life in Georgia, in recent years he married a woman from Goshen and so he has reentered our lives and we have enjoyed our association. He was so good to visit Allan in the rest home and was always kind and gracious to us. Daddy loved the chance to go to the funeral and get to know his uncle better.

Well, I better close. It's late and I'm waiting up for SaraKay to return from a music clinic in Bancroft. The buses were supposed to arrive an hour ago but due to the winter storm that has moved in today, they were delayed and she is still

not home. I am doing a little better and trying to be patient with this healing process.

[Dad] On Friday, I met Karen and we went flew to Phoenix together. It was nice to have that time with my "baby sister." One of the things we visited about was how much she learned about leadership and working with people from the retreats we used to have when I was Bishop when we took all the YM/YW class presidencies to West Yellowstone for a training seminar. I think she was the Mia Maid class president and still depends on the principles she learned at that time. It was gratifying to me to learn of her feelings.

It was such a treat to stay with Don & Lisa in their new home in Gilbert. It was hard to quit visiting and go to bed. The next morning, we met at the church where the funeral was being held to practice our song. That practice went well as did the performance and it was a treat to have the five of us singing together. On the first verse, Scott quit after the first measure and let us sing it acapella and we blended beautifully. The middle line of the middle verse reads: "Jesus sought me when a stranger, wandering from the fold of God." Gary told us how significant that was in view of how Staff and Kathy met. He had left Ricks mid semester and was combining grain in Gilbert. She had not been to church for some time and went to sacrament meeting on a dare wearing a short skirt and came in and sat on the back row. Staff came in and sat on the same row--got a date for Tuesday night and asked her to marry him on Thursday. Her reply: "What took you so long!"

It was wonderful to be there to lend our support to Staff. Several of Kathy's cousins talked to us about what a wonderful husband Staff was and how they felt like he "walked on water." A couple of recurring themes in the memories about Kathy involved how much she loved to drive and her spontaneity. Jimmy told of one time while they were living in Rexburg and he was in grade school. Kathy got him out of school one day and said she was in the mood for a "Weiner on a Stick." The closest one was in Salt Lake City. They got their wiener and made the trip to SLC and back.

Yesterday was Uncle Bim's funeral. I didn't ever know him very well because he lived in Marietta, Georgia. Apparently, he had made 60 trips across the country to Firth and back. He left for college at the University of Idaho during the depression. Grandpa gave him $35.00 and a bus ticket to Moscow and said he would have to earn his way through school.

He would go out in the woods and cut cedar posts, borrow a truck to haul them to southern Idaho to sell, and then haul potatoes back to sell in Moscow. One time he wrote, pleading to come home--my hands fit a shovel better than a pen. Grandpa sent a telegram back telling him to stay in school.

When he interviewed with Lockheed, they said--you have a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering; that is good. It is also good that you are a pilot and in the Air Corp. But the best qualification is that you were raised on a farm, know how to work, and have some common sense. He could talk to anyone, young or old, and find common ground.

It was also good to see Vincent and Gwen Reid and Wallace and Marlene Reid. The former are in their 90's but are always so good to show their support and love for the Larsen's.

January 23, 2006

[Mom] We have appreciated the letters from John and Laurel this past week. Our thoughts and prayers have certainly been focused on them and their sweet family. It has been comforting to be in touch despite the miles that separate us. This morning I read Nate and Maureen's weekly email to their family and their encouragement for them to join with us in praying for John and Laurel and Baby Tessa. I know that all of the prayers have brought comfort and peace at this difficult time. I keep thinking how much more difficult our present family situation would be if we couldn't be in contact and lend support.

When I talked to Laurel she mentioned meeting a couple from Provo in the Hong Kong Distribution Center and of their sweet exchange. The woman told them that she had lost a baby at five months and that she was told to include the baby on her family group sheet. When Laurel told me this, I couldn't help thinking that this meeting in the distribution center was one of the Lord's "tender mercies" and that one of the questions they had been grappling with was if Baby Tessa had a spirit yet and would be theirs to raise during the millennium. This information brought Laurel a lot of comfort because she told me that although it is difficult to carry a baby that probably won't live, just knowing that Baby Tessa is having her "turn on earth" makes it worth it. I thought Emma's comment about Laurel being with Tessa all the

time right now showed a lot of understanding for a seven-year-old.

Several of you have asked how I am doing with my recovery. I think I am finally feeling like life is going to resume for me again. Just this small bout with ill health has taught me so much. It brought clearly to me what a blessing good health is and how much I take it for granted. I also learned how easy it is to get cross and ornery and feel isolated during a time of sickness. I came to realize that a nice phone call and encouraging words are worth so much.

On Wednesday night I showed the house in Blackfoot and sold it on Friday. The buyers are meeting with us today to bring earnest money and sign the papers. They are a newlywed couple and love it. We didn't get our full price but got a good offer and feel that it is the right thing for us to do. The buyers are willing to take it "as is" so we won't have to fix the sprinkler system nor put in the backyard. We figured we would have to complete these projects before selling but it looks like the buyer is anxious enough to get the house that they are going to assume it without those completed.

Daddy has been so busy this past week with Cedar Badge trainings and the annual Blackfoot District Recognition banquet. The dinner was on Saturday night and they had their usual wonderful attendance and support. When Daddy had his annual review last week, his boss mentioned what a great job Daddy does dealing with the volunteers and running a good program. That support is certainly evident when the district has an event and has such a great response! This weekend Daddy is leaving for a week-long training in the Florida Sea Base in the Florida Keys. He has been there before and fully enjoyed the experience. He will fly out Sunday and return on Saturday. Although it isn't a vacation, nevertheless, compared to his weekly marathon around here, it does give him some fun experiences and even some down time to see some things. SaraKay and I hate being here without him but we're glad he gets to get away.

[Dad] Work has been pretty busy with trying to get all the units in this area to finish off their charters and get them checked in, getting ready for the District Recognition Dinner, and everything else. Knowing I would be involved all day Saturday with the Cedar Badge Staff Training, I worked hard to have everything ready for the dinner so that my volunteers could set up and get ready without me.

We had about thirty-two certificates to print and frame, all the engraving to have done and pick up the awards for several special awards and the District Awards of Merit. The preparation of the program and printing of it was no small matter either because we have listed in the program or an insert all the Eagle Scouts for the year, all previous recipients of the District Award of Merit, any Silver Beaver awards in the District and so on. For the Cedar Badge Staff Training I had quite a few phone calls, about $2,800 worth of printing to order and supervise and also all the three-ring binders to pick up, as well as arranging for the necessary audio-visual equipment, flags & stands, and so on. In the midst of it all I was supposed to meet with my guys I supervise and have their annual reviews and prepare the appropriate paperwork to go into the Western Region. Yes, it was a hectic week and I am glad to have it over.

On Friday night I had a scare with a spell of dizziness and lack of balance that lasted most of the night and some residual into Saturday. I don't know what caused it and haven't had time to get to the doctor to get checked out. But Sunday I was about over it and I feel fine now. I have continued with my exercise regimen and even though I haven't lost any weight, I feel quite fit. One of the things that has really made a difference for me has been being able to take a nap for 20 to 30 minutes most days.

We are so pleased that Mike and Marci and Paul and Jenny are in the Orient right now. I don't think it is strictly a coincidence that months ago they planned this trip and it ended up being the week after John and Laurel learned about Tessa.

January 30, 2006

[Mom] Daddy left yesterday early afternoon for Miami via Idaho Falls and SLC. On Saturday evening when we were in the middle of a terrific blizzard, we worried that his flight would be cancelled, but thankfully by Sunday at noon the sun decided to shine, the roads cleared off, and the flight left I.F. as scheduled. He called this morning to check in and let us know that he arrived safe and sound about midnight, rented a car, and found his way to the Sea Base where the week-long training will take place. He has had such a busy past two weeks trying to get the charters completed that I am grateful that he is able to get away for a few days. The group gets to

do some touring and try their hand at sailing so it will be a nice vacation.

I just received a phone call from Mike and Marci. Since John helped me set up Skype on my computer, we can call back and forth on the computer. It was almost midnight in Chongqing so I was surprised to hear from them, but they said they are having a fantastic experience and seeing so many wonderful sights. Tomorrow will be their last day with John and Laurel and then they will be flying back to Beijing and on to Washington on Thursday. I'm sure Paul and Jenny are having an equally great time. I must admit that I will rest a little easier when both families touch down on American soil in a few days. The good news is that no one has the bird flu! Hopefully all will continue to go well.

I know that John and Laurel have appreciated all the prayers in their behalf. I know that prayers are heard and answered and Laurel expressed to me that they have felt the strength of our prayers these last two difficult weeks.

This morning I received a forwarded letter from my sister, Kathy, who has been keeping me updated on my cousin, Bob's, condition following surgery for cancer. Because of complications he was opened up twice after the initial surgery and they nearly lost him. He finally started to improve last weekend and they think he is going to make it. Kathy's email included a letter from Bob's wife, Marilyn, who thanked everyone for their prayers.

She told a sweet story of traveling a few weeks ago to Pennsylvania to see a new grandbaby and of sharing Bob's cancer story with a fellow who sat next to her in the plane. He offered his well wishes and said that he would add Bob to his church's prayer roll. Marilyn thanked him but thought no more about it until last week she received a short note from the fellow that included a program from his church's meetings with the prayer roll and Bob's name on it. She said that it reaffirmed her faith in the goodness of America to see this fine man, a relative stranger, and his whole congregation in New Jersey, praying for Bob. I thought that was a great example of Christian living!

When Daddy left yesterday, SaraKay and I joked about renting a video for every night he is gone and partying up a storm, but the truth of the matter is that having him gone leaves us both a little nervous. It is snowing this morning, the roads are icy and it makes it scary to go anywhere. I realize how much I rely on him when we face life alone.

For those of you who are fans of the game Scum, I thought you would be interested to know that Becky and Chet and two families from the branch went to a ski resort last weekend and had a great time playing Scum! I guess we can say that it is a truly internationally popular game now!

P.S. I just received a call from the China bunch. They were spending their last night together before leaving at 6:30 a.m. tomorrow for Beijing. They sounded like it's been a great Chinese New Year. I could hear the fireworks in the background as we visited.

February 8, 2006

[Mom] I went walking this morning for the first time in a month and it felt pretty good. My two walking buddies, Sharen Moss and Janet Jenks, have been out of commission for the last month, too, due to various problems, so I didn't feel like the odd man out. Sharen took it at a slower pace and we had our usual good visit, solving the problems of the world as we walked and talked.

It was great to hear from the world travelers and to know that they arrived home safely. It was certainly a wonderful trip for them! We so appreciate John and Laurel and their hospitality. Paul took hundreds of pictures!

Daddy was due to arrive home Saturday afternoon but he called Thursday evening and said that they were through with the training and he was sorry his flight wasn't until Saturday. I called Delta and they were willing to let him change his flight to Friday morning, so that is what he did. About one on Friday afternoon, he called saying that he was on his way home from the I.F. airport and then he asked if I wanted to go to a session at the temple. I couldn't believe that he was willing to do that since he had been up since 3:30 that morning getting checked in and boarded in Miami. I worried that he would sleep through the session, but he got along pretty well. His jet lag caught up to him Saturday morning and he enjoyed taking a good nap.

We had planned to go to the temple the previous Friday but as we were walking out the door, he commented that he thought he remembered that the temple was closed. We checked our stake calendars and he was right. So, I talked him into taking me to “Pride and Prejudice” instead. He was a great sport about it especially when we noticed that he and one other man were the only

males in the entire theater audience! I told him that every woman there was probably looking at him and thinking what a sweet guy he was to take his wife to a "chick flick."

I have been in the throes of preparing for the stake Women's Conference on February 25th. They have asked me to teach three sessions on Womanhood. Last week was calm around here with Daddy gone and SaraKay involved in play practices so I took advantage of the quiet and got nearly all of my presentation completed. On Sunday Daddy helped me with the computer posters that I needed and now I need to go to Kinkos and have them made up. It has been quite a challenge to decide what to say since I will have all ages of women and teenage girls attending my sessions. Hopefully I've got something that will be of worth to those who attend. It is always amazing when researching something like this to discover how much has been written on these topics by our church leaders. They really do give us wonderful counsel if we will just listen and obey!

Some of you are aware that on February 20th both the state House and Senate have a memorial service to honor legislators who have passed away the previous year. Since Grandpa served in both the House and the Senate he will be mentioned in both services, one at 10 a.m. and another at 11a.m. We will be going to Boise Sunday afternoon to stay with David and Andrea that night and then attend the services the next morning.

It has been sweet to receive emails from all of Dad's siblings except Jeanie saying that they are planning to attend also. Dennis Lake who serves in the House asked Gary if the family could come up with a patriotic musical number for the occasion and so that is going to be very special for the siblings to participate in that. All the logistics haven't been worked out but soon will be. Dave thinks he and the kids get the day off from school and work so there is a chance they will be able to observe it with those of us in the balcony. That should be a memorable occasion for us all!

Hopefully Daddy can find a minute tonight to finish this off. He is playing with the orchestra for the school musical so every night this week and next he is involved with that. He is trying to juggle things around with all his other demands.

[Dad] A week ago on Sunday I attended all our meetings before heading to the IF airport and flying out to Miami. I got a flight that took me to Salt Lake and then direct from there. I arrived in Miami about 11:30 pm, picked up my rental car and starting driving south to the Sea Base. I arrived about 2:30 a.m. and found a couch in the lounge and slept there for the balance of the night.

The focus of this week of training was on leadership vs. management. The first session was entitled Management & Leadership Priorities--Life & Work. The next session was on Valuing Diversity. The next was Leadership & Vision followed by Leadership Practices Inventory based on surveys that had been given to my manager, co-workers, and the two guys I supervise. Based on that information I made some plans regarding a plan of action when I returned home to improve my skills and practices.

We next had a session on Leading Change, followed by a session on Empowerment based on a book called "Zapp" that we were required to read before we came. The final sessions were dealing with the Paradigms of Performance, Staff Meeting Issues, and Servant Leadership. We freed up Wednesday afternoon by doing night sessions. There were only 6 of us in the class of 14 that wanted to go snorkeling. We snorkeled for about an hour around and over Crocodile Reef. It was beautiful! I couldn't believe all the varieties of fish and how colorful they were. We saw several barracuda but no sharks. After that, while most of the rest headed to Key West, two of us went out on a two-man kayak, circled around Bird Island observing pelicans, cormorants, egrets, and many other birds nesting in the trees. The trees seemed really weird because they had roots growing down into the water from the overhanging branches and they were so thick we couldn't get near the island itself. Then we ate out at a seafood restaurant in Islamorada near the base. It was a great week with beautiful weather!

We finished up on Thursday night and as Sue explained we paid the $50.00 to move my ticket up 24 hours and I flew out from Miami at 7:00 that morning, necessitating arising at 3:45 a.m. to make sure I got where I needed to be on time and returned the rental car.

February 16, 2006

[Mom] Last week was especially busy with dress rehearsals all week for both SaraKay and Daddy. He has had a problem with not being to all the practices and so his part on the trumpet has been a little ragged. SaraKay had been

encouraging him to practice every chance he gets because she is worried that the orchestra will mess up the play. I couldn't help thinking that it was an interesting turn of events to have *her* nagging *him* to practice and not vice versa.

Tuesday night was their first performance and it was fun to see the results of all their hard work. When Daddy and I attended a dress rehearsal last week he commented, "It's going to take a miracle!" But, as the week progressed, it just kept getting better and better. Laurie Grayson does a masterful job as director and has been a real boon to our drama department. One bonus of a strong drama/music department is that the kids that participate are usually a pretty good bunch and most are very close friends.

Last Friday Daddy and I made a quick trip to Ogden to look at some property that Becky and Chet are thinking about buying. It is a parcel of land just a few miles up the canyon from Huntsville and a beautiful spot. They are still negotiating and only time will tell if the other party will consent but it gave us a chance to see some beautiful country and get away together.

We presently have four groups in our ward who are taking the missionary lessons. One family recently moved in from CA, another is a part-member situation, another is a Hispanic family and another is a 14-year-old boy whose family is totally inactive and has never gotten the children baptized. Our missionary efforts keep us hopping as we try to build relationships with all these people as well as make our other visits. I made valentine cookies Monday and we delivered those to several families. The bigger our circle of contacts becomes, the more time it takes and we have considered asking for another missionary couple to help out.

Last week the Wray's picked up three little Indian children and brought them to Primary. Tami Wray had bought Sunday outfits for them and they were washed, scrubbed, and shined up and looked so cute. I peeked in Primary and they were sitting with their arms folded taking it all in. They are being raised by their grandparents and although the grandparents aren't active, they requested that the children start attending since they know they need the church in their lives. Although it isn't perfect to have the kids attend without their grandparents, we will take who we can get and consider it "a foot in the door."

Another investigator attended Church with us. When I went to pick him up, he was wearing a suit that was about five sizes too large. His shoes were all dented in and scuffed and the neck on his white shirt gaped open. Following sacrament meeting he said that he didn't want to stay for the rest of the meetings and so I told him I would take him home. Just as we were getting ready to leave, one of the Laurels from the YW came up and welcomed him and invited him to attend Sunday school class with her and he immediately changed his mind and followed her to the ends of the earth! (I mean to class). I could have kissed that sweet girl who went out of her way to fellowship him. We got him a new white shirt and tie, some dress pants and some shoes that fit and he looks real spiffy now.

Daddy and I put in a shift at the cannery on Monday and enjoyed that opportunity. We have gone several times this past year and always come home grateful for the Church Welfare System. The fellow who supervised our group commented that the church canneries have been in high gear to keep up with the continuing demand as a result of the tsunami and the hurricanes. When all other relief efforts have come to an end, the Church is still on the scene with missionaries, commodities, and service. Isn't it a wonderful thing!!!

I know Mike and Marci spent last weekend in Boise, interviewing with a clinic there. They haven't called to say what's up but hopefully they'll let us know soon.

February 22, 2006

[Mom] We arrived home from Boise this evening about 6:30. We left yesterday right after our meetings and arrived at Dave and Andrea's about 5:30. They had prepared a delicious turkey dinner and it was so fun to be there with their family. We had a great time playing with the kids, holding McKay, and then visiting with them when things quieted down for the night. They are very content with their situation and thoroughly enjoying their church callings right now. Andrea gets to attend YW with Laurel, Anna has become the resident babysitter, and David's YM stake duties are a welcome relief from his previous demands in the Elder's quorum.

This morning we were up early and ready to leave for the Capitol building by 9:00. We arrived in time to take some pictures before getting situated in the balcony to watch the proceedings. They had reserved seating for us and it was fun to be

there. Those who attended were: Dave and Andrea's family, Gary, Staff, Mark, Rita, Jessica, Jeanette, Josh and their two little girls, Rick, Terry, Amanda, Aubry, Jonathon, Karen, Jim, Jacob and Josh.

The original plan was to attend the House memorial at 10 and then go to the Senate but the House program was nearly two hours long so we hurriedly left after Allan was honored (his was last on the program) and went over to catch just the end of the other service. Dennis Lake did the honors in the House and Stan Williams did it in the Senate. Joe Cannon came into the gallery and welcomed us when we first got there, as did Dennis. They were very gracious and kind.

Following the two services we had lunch at a little Mexican restaurant downtown with most of the group and had a good chance to visit. I asked Karen how Teresa is enjoying her stay in England and she said that she is having a wonderful experience. She is on a semester abroad from Utah State. Mark and Rita are visiting with Jet and Josh for the week and then they will be going to Provo to see JoEllen and her husband before returning to Denver.

It was especially sweet to see Staff and visit with him. His daughter Coco will be going through the temple to be sealed on the 11th of March and their family will be gathering for that. He seemed to be doing very well. He drove over with Gary and I imagine that it was good therapy. We didn't get much time with Rick and Terry but I know it was especially sweet for Rick to visit with some of the people at the Capital who he knew from the time he spent there with Grandpa.

Last week was so busy for SaraKay and Daddy as they had performances for Ragtime every night but Monday. The play was absolutely marvelous and they had a good crowd every night. I know SaraKay is going to go through a little bit of withdrawal since she has devoted so much time to it the last few weeks but Daddy and I are just grateful to have our lives back.

My big presentation is this weekend. I just hope that the things I've prepared will be appropriate and helpful. It is difficult to address the challenges of women, ages 12-85! I have certainly spent a lot of time on my knees and have read everything I could on the subject. It will be a huge relief to have it over!

I called Mike and Marci tonight to find out just what they had decided about the offer in Boise. They both had some reservations about it and so decided to stay where they are for the time being. They both feel that Okanogan won't be their permanent place of residence but for now it feels right and so they are staying put.

P.S. I had a visit with Laurel last night and they are planning to come to Ohio in the very near future. It has been such a strain on everyone and they felt that they could better manage things and have accessibility to some excellent medical help if they came to the U.S. John is getting the details worked out.

Steve called last night and said that they have sold their house and will be closing on it March 31st. They have been in touch with a realtor and today Steph and Shauntel were going to look at some of the available homes. I'm sure it's a relief to get their home sold. Hopefully they can find something in Cache Valley.

February 27, 2006

[Mom] We had another treat today. Staff had breakfast with us and visited for a couple hours before leaving for home. He drove from CA for the memorial service, visited friends and family for the week and then was headed back today. He was planning a stop in Pocatello to have lunch with Rick and then on to Vegas by night where Coco lives. We had a wonderful visit and could feel his acceptance of recent events in his life. He recounted for us the events of the week Kathy died and of the strengthening of testimonies as he and his family came to grips with Kathy's impending demise. I had not realized it but Matt arrived before Kathy passed away and had some time with her. All in all, the family felt like she was at peace.

This past week Staff has not only visited family but also made contact with some old high school acquaintances and took his annual snowmobiling trip with Gary. We were pleased to get some one-on-one time this morning with him. He is still up in the air about what changes he wants to make.

Several of you have called asking about John and Laurel. They are in transit as we write. John received permission from Ford to work over the internet with the plant in Chongqing (night time hours) and to do that for as long as he needs to until Laurel delivers Baby Tessa. He and Laurel felt the need to return to Laurel's parents' home in Cincinnati where Laurel could get the moral support she needs at this time.

Laurel has a wonderful doctor who delivered James and who has experience with Turner Syndrome babies and who will care for Laurel through the balance of her pregnancy. One of the most difficult things is not knowing just when she will deliver and being there close to family and in a nurturing environment will be good for everyone. Laurel told John that he should return to China and keep his job secure but he feels confident that he can fulfill his obligations with the present set-up and his boss in China has been kind and accommodating.

Steph and Shauntel spent a day last week house hunting for Steve and Bonnie. With the help of a realtor and references from the internet they looked at and located a home. They took lots of pictures and transmitted them to the Tennessee Larsen's and when all was said and done, a house was bought! They were both so pleased and excited with what they found that I'm sure it will be a good choice. Bonnie and kids will fly back the end of March, spend a few days with us and the Bensons, and then Steve will join them and they will get moved in.

Marci has been in Utah for a few days for some baby showers and so Mike has been a lone man. Some of you have asked regarding their Boise trip. They were offered the position but neither of them felt like it was what they wanted and they have some wonderful benefits at the Okanogan Clinic and will continue there until they find just the right fit. Although it is a long way from a major city, I think it has kind of grown on them and they are making the most of this time in the Northwest.

My women's conference presentation went well. I had been so stressed out about it that I wasn't sleeping very well and I could feel myself getting a cold. I knew I would be miserable trying to teach those sessions if I was sick and I just kept praying that I would be well. By Friday night I was truly a basket case. I had laryngitis so bad I could hardly talk. Daddy was in Arco at a district meeting and SaraKay kept trying to reassure me that I would be fine. By the time he walked in the door at 10:30 I was fit to be tied and I asked him for a blessing. He was already in his suit so he just adjusted his tie and gave me a beautiful blessing. He put my mind at ease regarding things and I was able to get a good night's sleep and feel more confident.

My sessions were all in the chapel but they didn't want me using the mic since there were other classes in the foyers and overflow areas and they thought it would be disruptive to the other classes so I just had to project as best I could. I had three 45-minute sessions. Part of it was class participation so it wasn't straight talking for me but as you can imagine by the time I was through I was really hoarse. In fact, most of the other presenters had similar problems and they weren't sick to begin with. I felt so grateful that I had been able to present without coughing or losing my voice. I had good comments and felt rewarded for my hours of preparation.

SaraKay asked me later why I say I will do these presentations when they are such an ordeal for me. I know it was hard for her to see me so stressed. This is one thing that I can do that I really enjoy when all is said and done. It is just getting harder now that I'm getting older. I really appreciated SaraKay's support. Although there were lots of other sessions that she could have gone to, she sat through my session first and then came up afterward to give me some positive feedback. That meant a lot.

Sunday was our ward conference and I spoke on missionary work. I had been mulling over several different things that I might say and when I got home on Saturday from the conference, I sat down and wrote up my talk in about a half an hour. I mentioned several specific things that had been done by ward members, leaders, and families. One person I mentioned in my talk was a 90 year-old man, Eldon Felt, who had seen an investigator at our annual Christmas party and had noticed he was standing alone and looking a little lost. Eldon had gone over and made his acquaintance and visited with him until his contact friend arrived. I mentioned this experience for several reasons. One was to stress that no matter how old we are, we can contribute to the cause. The other was to show how small and simple kindnesses can help in this work.

Later President Thalgott of the new stake presidency spoke and before he got into his topic he mentioned that almost 30 years ago as newlyweds he and his wife had attended sacrament meeting in the Riverside Ward and although he looked pretty unlikely with his long hair down past his collar, it was Eldon Felt who came up, shook his hand, and welcomed them. That was a turning point in their lives and they have never forgotten it. What a sweet coincidence. Later after our conference was over, Eldon came up to me in the foyer and wrapped his arms around me and thanked me for the sweet

words. It was fun to give some kudos to people who have been so supportive of our efforts.

[Dad] This morning when I went to work I had about $10,000 of FOS I had to audit and count and then take it to Pocatello to get deposited and entered on the computer. Another nine days like this and we will be at our goal for this year.

Saturday I did a few things around my office that I had been wanting to get done and then in the afternoon I went to Pack 262's (sponsored by the Blackfoot Rotary club) Blue & Gold Dinner to present them their charter and to make a pitch for Friends of Scouting. They had an Indian boy from Fort Hall that had been a part of their pack from the time he was a Tiger Cub that was graduating from Webelos into Scouts. They had recruited a group from Fort Hall to present some Indian dances and singing complete with drums and costumes and so on. They had also done a service project of painting over some graffiti on the reservation and so the tribe had given them some buffalo meat for their dinner. So, we had Indian Tacos with buffalo meat and all the trimmings. It was a wonderful program as they graduated twelve boys and had about 45 boys and their families there in the commons area of the Mountain View Middle School.

We went to the temple Friday morning for a ward Initiatory assignment. We certainly felt the Spirit and were grateful for the affirmation of the wonderful blessings that are a part of the temple ordinances. The changes made in the washing and anointing procedures are certainly welcome from a modesty standpoint. I came home and found the reference regarding Aaron and his seed and their washing and anointing and clothing. It has been hard to keep up the pace of reading four chapters a day in the Old Testament, but I have been amazed at some of the things I have read that I didn't remember reading before. But it sure makes me appreciate the Book of Mormon for ease of reading by comparison.

March 6, 2006

[Mom] We had a fun weekend with the kids in Logan. We spent Friday evening with Steph and Linds, attending a soccer match that Sam and Josh played in. Lindsay is the coach with another fellow and there is a large indoor soccer facility not far from their home. Both Sam and Josh do a good job although Josh is two years younger than most of the kids on the team. They were playing a state team and lost 9 to 3 but we felt good that they stayed that close considering that the state teams are like an all-star team. Following the game, we all went for pizza and Randy and Shauntel joined us.

Later on, Tim arrived from Provo and we got in some good visiting before going to bed. I had worried that I might have an allergic reaction to Bae but I got along fine. Daddy and Steph got up early and went for a walk up the hill in front of their home but the rest of us slept in and had a leisurely breakfast before leaving for the baptism at nine.

It was fun to be there for Camille's baptism. She wore a cute jumpsuit with lace trim and her long hair was braided down the back with a white ribbon entwined in it. She sure looked cute and had family from both the Larsen's and the Archibald's there to support her. Following her baptism, we had a short meeting for our group. Camille had asked her Grandma Marilyn to sing a baptism song and she accompanied herself on the guitar. Stephani gave a sweet talk about Camille's adoption and how happy we were to have her in the family and then the Primary President and the bishop gave a few remarks. I led the closing congregational song, SaraKay accompanied at the piano and Kate and Sam played a flute and oboe obbligato. Later we had a delicious dinner at Shauntel and Randy's. It was so fun for us and a special day for Camille, too.

We arrived home about three and then Daddy and I left to celebrate our anniversary by going to a movie and to dinner. SaraKay had plans to attend a play at the Nuart with a friend. We saw the show "Glory Road" and would highly recommend it to everyone. We thought it was just as well done as "Remember the Titans" and was based on a true story of a college basketball team of mostly black players in the 50's.

On the way home from our date, we talked a little bit about our life and marriage and how quickly life passes. We also talked about how in just 10 years we would be celebrating our 50th! It kind of blows your mind to see all the transitions and changes that a family goes through as the years pass. We couldn't help commenting on how grateful we are for sweet kids and grandkids and what a great blessing each of you are in our lives. It feels like some kind of a milestone to have made it this far and to still be in love and happy with the choice we made 40 years ago. The older I get the more I love Daddy and appreciate all that he does to make my life pleasant and

joyful. We look forward to the chance to serve a mission in the near future.

We were overjoyed to receive the news from John and Laurel about their optimistic prognosis for Baby Tessa. I know that this will complicate things for them with John's work but it sounds like they are getting things worked out and that Laurel will settle in with her parents and await Tessa's birth. They enrolled Emma and James in school last Friday and today was their first day. I'm sure there will be some adjustments for them but it will make life a little easier for Laurel and help them pass the time until their return to Chongqing. We appreciate how they have kept us updated on the situation. John said that they are going in for a consultation with several specialists to talk about Baby Tessa in detail. One of the x-rays showed that her heart may have an abnormality and she may need surgery soon after birth so that is one of the issues that will be addressed.

[Dad] Last weekend I had to get excused from a couple meetings on Saturday and have someone cover for me, but it was worth it to have the special time with the family. Friday night at Fire House Pizza was a lot of fun and Archie was my little buddy for the night. The pizza was wonderful!! One of the interesting things to me with our visit was how much Bae is a part of the family and her interesting personality. On Saturday morning during our walk we had to keep track of her because she kept getting sidetracked following her nose.

I found out yesterday that my supervisor, Mike Marchese, has accepted a position with the Grand Canyon Council in Phoenix and will be leaving at the end of the month. I have enjoyed working with him and will miss him.

As a district director, I am one of the four in the council that would be eligible to apply for promotion to his spot as Director of Field Services. This is a position that can be filled internally or from another council. I'm not sure whether I want to take on that additional responsibility and time constraints at this point, though it would probably mean a raise that would be reflected in a stronger retirement income when that time comes. Mom and I need to council about that decision some more.

Sue mentioned our 40th celebration. It is quite thought provoking to reach a milestone like that. What a lifetime of shared experiences, ups and downs, trials and accomplishments, but mostly cherished memories. We have certainly grown to love and appreciate each other more over the years. We have grown to know and understand each other and accept the flaws along with the strengths. (The flaws are mostly on my side of the ledger.) And through it all, our greatest memories and accomplishments relate to our family--which has always been our #1 priority.

March 15, 2006

[Mom] Yesterday when we were scheduling our week, Daddy mentioned that he wished I could find time to help him do some thorough cleaning at the scout office. I mentioned that this morning would probably work for me and so after I walked, I loaded up the car with the vacuum and cleaning supplies and joined Daddy at his office. His main concern was the bathroom and small kitchenette and when I saw them, I knew why he had been wanting some help. They truly were in bad need of a good cleaning and I spent the next couple hours at it. After we went to lunch together, I was able to finish up with some vacuuming and ran a few errands before coming home.

I called Deniece yesterday to talk about the weather and she told me that the Salt Lake area was expecting several inches of snow these next few days. We have been keeping close touch because Deneice is coming to Rexburg for Women's Week and our plan is for her to drop Grandma off in Pocatello at Wright's house. Grandma gets so nervous about traveling in bad weather that she won't come unless she is sure the weather is going to be clear. We aren't sure just what Thursday will bring. If all goes as planned, Grandma will be here Thursday-Saturday and return with Deniece on Saturday when she finishes up at BYU-I.

We had a quieter week last week with the high point being when we closed on our Blackfoot house. Ever since we took earnest money on it, I have worried that the couple would back out at the last minute because it seemed like they were pretty uncertain if buying a house was really in their best interest. When the second inspector gave us a list of things that needed to be done before we could close on it, I worried that they would lose heart and just say they wanted out but they worked right with us to get things done and finished up.

Then when we went to sign the papers, we found out that when they had gone in to sign, they were told that because of the nature of their loan, they would have another $2500 to come up with, I was

amazed that they still signed on the dotted line. What a relief to have that completed!

We have touched base with most of you the past couple of weeks and everyone seems to be doing well. John is working several hours each day over the internet and Skype and feels like when they have their consultation, they will have a better feel for just what the demands will be. He and Laurel have been helping Marilyn and Ken with some projects around the house and trying to make themselves useful. The two older kids are in school and seem to have made the transition and Laurel is keeping Eliza home with her. All in all, they are taking this a day at a time and praying for the Lord's guidance.

Steve and Bonnie and family will fly into SLC on March 25 and begin their move back to Wellsville. The house is progressing and hopefully will be ready. In the meantime, they will be staying a couple nights with each of several families and closing on April 7th. Ideally the moving van and their car will arrive on time and they can get this move behind them.

We are going to do a service project for FHE tonight and help the Reynolds move. How I hate to see them go. This last week, three families, all of them good solid members, sold their homes and are moving out of the ward. One buyer is active but the other two are nonmembers or inactives and so we'll need to add them to our teaching pool. We need to let ward members know that they can't sell and move unless they sell to active families!

[Dad] Our FHE project with the Reynolds involved washing their windows and cleaning off strips of tape and stickers and labels that came on the windows. We were impressed with their modular home and how open and nice it is. However, it certainly wouldn't have been one of my choices to build in the lava's! We are

continuing to have sweet experiences with our missionary work. It is all in the details--the little things make such a big difference. I know we are making some headway with our relationships with the less actives we are visiting regularly. When we went in to meet with the stake presidency for our temple recommend interviews, we were both complimented on all the missionary activity we are generating in the ward. We have actually set some goals--8 convert baptisms this year and 16 less actives brought into activity. That seems pretty aggressive, but I think we can do it.

As Sue mentioned one of the major efforts this week was cleaning up the Blackfoot office. I filled the large garbage can with debris cleaned out of the office, planed off some doors that didn't fit, and put together a wardrobe to fit in the corner of the bathroom to store snow shovels and brooms and stuff. All in all, it has made quite a bit of difference and I feel more comfortable working in a clean office. I would like to replace carpet, get it all painted inside, and remodel the front so that the rain and snow are deflected away from the entry.

March 20, 2006

[Mom] It's a cold but clear spring day outside, a nice change from the last four days of rain and snow showers. I'm not complaining. The snow we have received has been full of moisture and continues to bring relief from the six-year drought in Southeast Idaho. The only downside was that Grandma Ilene came for the weekend and it was a little unnerving for her to wake up Saturday morning to three inches of new snow and more on the way. But love will prevail, and the snow did not stop Wright from coming to get her that morning and take her to dinner and then a movie. It is nice to see them so happy. I think she enjoyed her travel time with Deniece, her stay with us, and spending some time with Wright. He is having his fourth cancer treatment this Wednesday and has been forewarned that the fourth and fifth treatments are the worst so Mom thought she should come see him while he is still well and in good spirits. It has been a real treat for all of us to have her around!

This week is a big one for SaraKay. Tomorrow is district solo music festival and she is performing a piano piece, a vocal number, and accompanying five other vocalists. It has been quite an undertaking to get the numbers learned and then find practice time with each vocalist. Her class load this tri isn't as heavy as it has been before and that has been a help to her.

Friday afternoon we are going to the Larsen sibling mini-reunion at Karen and Jim's in Layton. All of Dad's siblings are going to be there and Karen has done a lot of work to get things ready. We regret that we will need to come home late Friday.

Saturday night Steve and Bonnie will arrive from Tennessee and stay with us a couple days. Steve said that they may be closing on their home on the 31st so that is coming right up. He said that his deacon’s quorum gave him a surprise party in

class on Sunday including a decorated cake (one of the deacons' own handiwork) and a game of "spin the bottle" where each boy in the quorum responded to the question "what I like about Brother Larsen." I could tell that Steve was touched by their thoughtfulness.

Today John and Laurel will meet with the cardiologist. The plan right now is for John to return to China on April 3rd and stay until the baby is expected in June. He is really dreading the separation but doesn't see any alternative since Laurel needs to be near the hospital for any eventuality. It's hard to be so uncertain about what life holds. (P.S. I just got off the phone with John and he was very encouraged) It took over an hour for the technician to perform the ultrasound on Laurel but they got a very good clear picture of Tessa's heart. She has a condition called coarctation which means that a growth on the aortic artery is partially constricting the flow of blood from the heart. They were surprised that other than this growth, the heart seemed very normal and both sides were of equal size which is very unusual for the condition.

The problem can be corrected by having a low-risk surgery that has a high success rate. Within the hour of Tessa's birth, she will be put on some medication that will allow her to live for several days and get stabilized before going in for the surgery. Following surgery, she will have about a ten-day recovery. If all goes well, she will be able to return with her family to China and live a fairly normal life. John said that babies with Turner syndrome have a variety of other symptoms but until they are born it is impossible to know just what she will have to deal with.

The doctors said that her heartbeat is okay and that they didn't feel like it was an issue as far as they could see. As you can imagine, the news was very encouraging and they have a little more hope for Tessa's survival and future. The consultation with all the other doctors isn't until next week so John told me to go ahead and give an update since so many of you have called asking how things are going. Thanks for your concerns and prayers.

I have been working on some projects and I am trying to finish up before spring arrives and all the yard work. It gets pretty consuming. Daddy is considering installing a sprinkler system with help from Lindsay and Tim once the ground thaws out and things warm up. Tim will be staying here from May 1st to June 1st studying to sit for his CPA exam in June and he said he would be willing to help us. Linds thought if Daddy had all the materials purchased and the layout of the system that he and his family and the rest of us here could get it well under way working on a Saturday.

[Dad] It was nice to have a day last Saturday and I finished off my taxes and got them submitted electronically. I have been enjoying the orchestra pieces that we are preparing--there is a lot more brass in most of the pieces we are working on and we sound good when we have two strong trumpets blending on our parts.

For FHE tonight we talked about the Millennium. It was fun to think about the conditions that will prevail. With all of SaraKay's performances with festival tomorrow she wanted a priesthood blessing, so we concluded with that.

March 28, 2006

[Mom] We've had a busy weekend with the Larsen mini reunion at Karen's on Friday and Steve and Bonnie and fam arriving Saturday evening. Daddy had an important Cedar Badge training Saturday morning so we weren't able to stay at Karen's for more than a few hours. We arrived about four-thirty and everyone was already there except for Rick and Terry and Jonathan. At first, we were all just visiting but then Gary and Linda suggested that we address some questions that would direct our visiting and that we could all share in. One of the questions was, "What do you see yourself doing five years from now?" It was fun to hear the responses and learn more about each other's future plans.

Following this discussion, we had a delicious dinner and then we headed for home. We regretted that it didn't work to have SaraKay stay either because Jonathan, Jacob, Josh, and Bethany were all there and it would have given SaraKay a chance to get better acquainted with her cousins.

Steve and Bonnie arrived about six on Saturday just as SaraKay and I were walking out the door for the YW conference. While we were gone, they got their car unloaded and settled in. On Sunday we filled a whole row in the center section and it felt like old times again! Sunday afternoon we went to the Idaho Falls Visitor Center and watched the film on Joseph Smith. It was a touching portrayal of his life and ministry. Bonnie had heard from some friends that it was quite violent and so she stayed home with Jared and Anne

Marie. I think the other kids enjoyed it and were glad that they went. I got so involved in it that I totally forgot to watch for Mike and Marci!

Yesterday Steve (son) spent the day on his computer working and we had a restful day after the big weekend. Bonnie went shopping in the afternoon and Rachel and I stayed behind and ended up downstairs working on a quilt that I am tying. I am taking a quilting class that our ward R.S. is offering and I bought some quilt frames and have been working away on some projects. Rachel offered to help and did a great job. It gave us a chance to have a great one-on-one time together.

This morning Bonnie and family will spend the day at her sister, Shannon's. They are planning to spend a night each with Shauntel and Steph and then Bonnie's aunt Cecelia before moving into their new home on Monday. They are excited to be back to Cache Valley.

I might mention that on Saturday night we had a major storm move through the area that knocked out power, downed fences and mature trees, tore off porches, and wreaked havoc in general. The papers on Monday were full of pictures of large pine trees on their sides and other debris from the storm cluttering the streets in Blackfoot. Apparently, the storm was pretty widespread because one of our ward members who had taken her daughter and some friends to the YW conference in SLC had to stop in Malad, share a hotel room with a girl from BYU-I who was a total stranger, and then wait until morning to continue. She said that you couldn't see more than a few feet in front of the car and the lines were totally obliterated!

[Dad] I spent most of the day working on a bulk mail that we are sending to 6,500 households inviting the boys to sign up for Cedar Badge. We get a big share of our signups from these bulk mailings. I also spent some time with Larry Dunstan, our new endowment director for the council discussing prospects and centers of influence in the Blackfoot District that he could be working with. Yesterday was a full day staff meeting. With my immediate supervisor leaving last week, we have divided the responsibilities that he had with the three District Directors--Dave has membership, Brian has FOS, and I have the staff meetings and last week's reception for Mike Marchese. I sent out the agenda for staff meeting on Wednesday instead of 5:00 p.m. on Friday when we were used to getting it. We shaved about an hour off the usual meeting time.

Steve Covey's book, "The 8th Habit" has been one that I have wanted to read for some time and got started on it last week. It has a DVD with it that has several short movies and I used a cute one on goals for my staff meeting. The eighth habit is dealing with "finding your voice.

Saturday was a Cedar Badge Staff training in Idaho Falls. Starting at 7:30 we worked on CPR, first aid, GPS & compass, and knots, as well as other details and training for the youth staff. It was a great meeting. At the end of it we utilized the manpower we had available to put the bulk mail labels on. I had to line everything up and make sure we had all the supplies necessary.

Last Wednesday night after Program Meetings we had a reception for Mike Marchese as he was leaving to go to the Grand Canyon Council in Phoenix. Sue and I made up a punch recipe from the ward cookbook and I got gourmet cookies from Sam's Club. It turned out very well and the boss was pleased.

April 2, 2006

[Mom] We have spent most of the last two days listening to General Conference. It has been several years since we have been home for conference. We had planned to listen while we did yard work but the rain and cold kept us indoors and gave us an excuse to just focus on conference. We are led by some wonderful men and women! I'm so grateful for the restoration and for the many blessings that have filled my life because of my membership.

Mike's April Fool's email announcing the arrival of a new baby boy had some of the family wondering just what was going on. Fortunately, most of you realized that the announcement was hokey and that Marci is still awaiting the arrival of their firstborn.

Steve and Bonnie have been staying in Logan with Steph and Linds and with the Anderson's these past few days. Tomorrow is moving day for them. We haven't seen their new home yet but hope to see it this weekend when we go for Josh's ordination. I know they have appreciated the hospitality of their family.

John will be flying back to China on April 4th and Laurel will stay with her folks until the baby arrives. It is going to be a difficult two months for both of them, but it seems the best option.

Despite the unsettled weather I have gotten some yard work started this past week. Today after conference, Daddy and I went for a walk around the yard and made note of all the things that need to be done. It is rather overwhelming this time of year but it is also a source of satisfaction to see it looking nice. This year we have added a bird and squirrel feeders. One of the families that we visit as a part of our missionary duties have several feeders and we have used that as a topic of conversation when we have visited with them. Now when we make our visits, we can have some common ground. The experience has been fun since we now have a squirrel and all kinds of birds that frequent our backyard. We have a beautiful male pheasant that feeds along with a multitude of beautifully marked birds that come around. It has been fun to have our own private bird refuge.

[Dad] Blackfoot District is in the process of the changing of the guard as we let Don Scott go as Chairman and work with Wayne Mikesell as a new chairman.

Yesterday was a bit of a disappointment because of the weather--we had ambitious goals for what we wanted to get done in the yard. I got two of the apple trees pruned and Sue raked the willow branches that have blown off of our windbreak.

April 11, 2006

[Mom] I'm in the mood to write this morning even though my bed isn't made and I have this nagging headache. I took some meds about six and went back to bed to try to shake it and it has mostly subsided. I thought walking might get it to release so I just got back from my morning walk and the head is the same but my spirits have been lifted by the good visits I had with my walking buddies.

When I sat down to breakfast with Daddy this morning, I told him that I felt like I had been run over by a truck and he said he felt the same. He had a marathon week last week ending on Saturday with the first of three Saturday Pow-wows. They have a merit badge pow-wow each April for three weeks and about 300-350 boys earn badges. It is a major undertaking and the first week is especially overwhelming with all the registrations, logistics, instructors, and other details. Besides that, Daddy is on his feet for hours on end and that is always tough on him.

When he got home about 2 p.m. SaraKay and I were gone to her scholarship try-outs and he came home and went outside to work. When we got home about five, he was out in the garden pulling corn stalks and I worried that he had overdone. Sure enough, he was hurting from head to foot!

We had some dinner and SaraKay and I left again and while we were gone, he went back out and worked some more. By dark he was exhausted, but needed pain meds to get to sleep. I was sorry that I hadn't been around to tell him "You've worked long enough! Now come inside and rest!" (He doesn't mind very well anyway). So, when he said this morning that he felt like he needed to go back to bed, I understood why!

This past month has been a very stressful one for SaraKay. The school musical is always a major undertaking but right on the heels of that was the solo/ensemble festival for the district and she was preparing a number for that as well as accompanying five other students who were competing. The music program in our school is very competitive and to qualify for Chamber Singers a student has to show effort in solo and group performances.

This year Snake River had 75 entries in the district competition which is a truly phenomenal effort. When the kids started preparing their numbers the choir director encouraged them to use student accompanists and so along with her piano festival preparations SaraKay took on five accompaniments, two of which were very challenging. I worried about it cutting too much into her piano practicing time but once she had committed, she felt like she needed to follow through. Anyway, to make a long story short, she did pretty good on her accompaniments but she didn't feel too good about her personal performances in vocal and piano.

Two days after the festival she learned that she had qualified to go to the state solo competition in Boise the first weekend in May. The difficult part was that her good friend who is a senior got first alternate and SaraKay felt badly about that. Later she said that she was going to defer and pass the opportunity on to her friend who gets to go if 1st and 2nd choose to defer. Her choir teacher and Daddy and I don't know if that is the right thing to do but we're leaving it up to her.

On Saturday the Blackfoot piano festival was held and SaraKay performed her pieces at 10:20. I had planned to go with her but she could tell that I was pretty stressed and I told her that maybe I would let her go alone. She admitted that it's easier for her to perform without me there and so

for the first time in 30 something years of festivals, I stayed home.

At about 11:30 I was at the church at a rehearsal when she poked her head in and said that she had gotten a 99 and qualified for scholarship tryouts. We had a quick lunch and then returned to the school and sat through 3 hours of try-outs. When all was said and done, SaraKay took 2nd place in the senior division and won a $300 scholarship. She has wanted to attend a strings camp that several of her friends attended last year and now with this scholarship, she can.

With all the stress she has been under SaraKay asked her Dad for a father's blessing. In the blessing Steve said that in her performance she would have borne witness to her the truth of the Law of the Harvest. This has been quite an issue in her life since lately she has made significant sacrifices for her music training and sometimes wonders if it's worth it.

When she requested the blessing, Daddy mentioned that he had just given her a blessing a few weeks ago in regards to another situation and she said that that blessing had worn off and she needed a fresh one for this event. Daddy asked the question, "What is the half-life of a father's blessing, anyway?"

Sunday morning the seminary had a sunrise Easter testimony meeting and SaraKay and her friends went. It wasn't very well attended and she said that when she walked in the chapel, she realized there were so few students that she felt like everyone there would need to get up and bear their testimony. As it turned out, more students came but they almost all had a chance to bear their testimonies and it was a very sweet experience.

SaraKay said that President Gwynn of the stake presidency bore his and mentioned the scripture that our testimonies are recorded in heaven and that the angels rejoice over them. He then went on to ask the question, "Who do you think these angels are who are rejoicing over your testimony?" He told them that he thought they were their deceased grandparents and relatives who had gone before, but he also felt like they are their future children who are in heaven rejoicing that their future parents are living the gospel and staying true! What a wonderful mind-expanding thought!

This put me in mind of the blessing that Daddy gave to John before he left for China in which he told him that he would receive help from both sides of the veil in the time he would be in China. I always looked on that promise as one of physical protection but now I see that maybe in John's lonely hours he will be strengthened and supported by his two grandfathers and grandma Barbara. (That brings me a lot of comfort at this time of concern for him).

When I called him last week, he was in good spirits and said that work is very demanding and that it is good because he has the time to give it now. He also mentioned that two of his mission companions are presently living in China, one in Shanghai and another in Hong Kong and that they are getting together for the May holiday in Hong Kong and going to go to the temple. It amazes me how we are going into China and that the missionary program has opened up these opportunities.

Laurel, too, is doing well. She and the kids were going to her sister, Becky's home in Columbus for the spring break. I know how Laurel loves her sister and I'm sure this will be a time of rejoicing for the two of them. (I couldn't help but think about Mary and her cousin Elizabeth in the New Testament and their time together before the birth of their babies.)

Our quick trip to Logan yesterday for Josh's ordination was enjoyable. They had invited both sides of the family to join them for the event and it was held in their home. Doug, Naomi, (Linds' dad and mom) and Chris (his brother) as well as us, Andersons, and Steve and Bonnie and family and home teachers and bishopric members were all there for the occasion. We had been visiting and the kids had been running around outside having a great time when the bishop arrived and everyone was called in. As the circle was formed around Josh, it became quiet; even the littlest ones sensed the sacred nature of what was happening and sat quietly during the ordination.

I loved the blessing that Lindsay gave. He told Josh that receiving the priesthood was a call to serve and that he should look around him at his friends and associates and look for opportunities to reach out and serve and strengthen. It was wise counsel and I felt the Spirit so strongly. When the blessing was over, I commented to Doug that it was a sweet occasion and that the blessing was beautiful. I also said, "That's one fine son you have there!" He was a little teary and rightfully so!

It doesn't seem possible that Steph and Linds have all these older kids! But then I look at all the

grandkids and realize that we are moving into a new era with older grandchildren and all the fun it is to see them grow and mature. Of course, Katie leads the way and will be a senior next year and she is such a good example of young womanhood in her dedication to getting her education and keeping herself worthy of the Lord's blessings. Sam, too, is a fine example for all the other grandsons as he develops himself in so many different areas and lives the gospel.

Before leaving for home, we followed Steve and Bonnie to their new home and took a grand tour. What a lovely home and spot! There's a lot to be done to get the yard prepared but it's wonderful to have them closer.

Let me close with a short missionary success story. We have so many contacts right now that some weeks I feel overwhelmed with trying to keep up with them all. We don't want anyone to feel like we aren't interested in them and their progress so we try to check with them weekly.

One lady who has been activated after nearly 20 years of inactivity has been a special friend but once she started coming, we didn't get over to visit her as much. I had her on my mind, worrying that she needed more fellowshipping. The R.S. called to ask if I would substitute in a musical presentation for a V.T. seminar they were presenting. When I walked into the rehearsal, there was Donna, front and center, taking part in the play. Although she didn't have a speaking part, she was involved and we had a great time at the practice. She was even taking off work to be a part of the evening's program. I was so grateful that the R.S presidency pulled her in and gave her a job to do! Most of the participants were either new ward members or newly activated sisters! That's the kind of support we get in this ward!

[Dad] This past week has been wonderful and with many rewards. It was a joy to gather at the Bennion's for Josh's ordination. Linds said that they had been living so far away during most of their married life that having family gather for special events was something they had not been used to, and yet how wonderful it was.

Sue mentioned the Merit Badge Pow Wow on Saturday. My work began that day at 6:45 a.m. as I began setting up--putting maps around, signs on rooms, and opening all the doors at the Junior High. I finally got home at 1:30 after waiting for all the boys to be picked up by sometimes forgetful parents. After a quick bite I went out to work in the yard and did some more pruning, fertilizing the lawn, and cleaning up the garden. After Sue and SaraKay left for Jr. Miss, I went back out to gather up the branches from my pruning and to pull the metal posts for the fence we had when the windbreak trees were small. I removed the wire but hadn't pulled the posts. We wanted to loan them to DaLon Esplin for his campaign for judge.

One of the highlights of last week was our orchestra concert. We had worked hard on some really challenging music and it was satisfying to have it be so successful. There was quite a bit of brass in the selections we played and it was fun to have a strong trumpet section.

April 18, 2006

[Mom] Last week proved to be an emotional one. As most of you know, Mike left a message on my answering machine on Wednesday morning that Marci was in labor and that they were at the hospital. He said that she was dilated to a 6 or 7 and so I thought that maybe she would have a quick delivery. First babies are always tricky because no one really knows how it is going to go and usually the first baby is a little more difficult.

Well, after waiting all day for "the call," I finally called him about six and he said that there was little progress. When we went to bed about 10:30 we wondered if we would be able to sleep, just worrying about Marci and what was happening. About 12:30 a.m. the call came and Mike was brief but said that the doctors had ended up doing a C-section. Baby and Mom were doing fine, but understandably exhausted. Apparently, the baby's head was in the birth canal but wasn't progressing at all and so after about 2 1/2 hours of pushing, they went ahead with the surgery. Mike was able to watch the procedure.

As you can imagine, it has been a slower recovery and as of last night, Marci and baby were still in the hospital. Fortunately, Karen arrived on Friday and will be able to be there to help the healing and transition. We are grateful for the baby's safe arrival and pray that Marci will have a quick recovery.

On Thursday morning I was getting ready to call Grandma Ilene when I received a call from Deniece saying that Grandma had caught her foot in her purse strap while getting out of Kathy's car and had fallen, breaking the femur in her hip socket. Kathy knew immediately that she was seriously injured and called 911 for an

ambulance. Grandma was transported to the St. Mark's Hospital and heavily sedated until her surgery about 4 p.m. She has been on heavy medications until yesterday and not really aware of much. Yesterday the therapist got her up to sit on the edge of the bed and that has been the extent of her movement. I will be taking my turn being with her this week on Thursday-Saturday. If she continues to progress, she will be transferred to the care center on the sixth floor of the hospital and will be there for two-three weeks having therapy. The doctors said that she will probably be able to walk with the use of a cane but that this surgery seems to sap the strength of a person of Grandma's age (84) and he was very frank about the prognosis. He said that most patients pass away within about six months of having this operation and that the family should be aware of that.

When Deneice told me about his prognosis I couldn't believe it. When both of our Grandpas died, I was relieved because they were so ready but I don't feel ready for Grandma to leave. She has been such an amazing mentor, friend, and confidante over the years...the first one I call with news, both good and bad, and such an example of righteousness. Whenever I wonder about a certain action, I just have to ask, "What would Mom do?" and I know how to proceed. Anyway, I have shed some tears and wished to be at her bedside but I'll have the chance this week.

Other family news: Deniece and Don are hosting an open house for Brent and Kari on Saturday the 29th of April at their home in Layton. It will be from 6-8 that evening. Kari will graduate from the BYU-I nursing program earlier that day so it is going to be a whirlwind day for them. We are planning to include this in our three-day trip for Tim's graduation that weekend.

This past Friday we received word that there had been a single-car roll-over near Rexburg involving two Blackfoot teens. The teens were the daughters of one of our investigators, Maria Cruz, who lives next to the Marlow home. Originally, we had the full-time elders teaching the family but Maria couldn't understand the lessons in English and so we called in the Spanish missionaries and they have been teaching the family. We were so sorry to hear of the accident and we have tried unsuccessfully to make a visit at the home.

Nolan Furniss, who has been a wonderful neighbor to the family, visited them in the hospital and Maria requested a blessing so this morning Nolan and Max Twiggs of the high priest group leadership made a visit and gave both Maria and her daughter, Miley, a blessing. They later reported in quorum meeting that it had been a very spiritual experience, with many of the Cruz family present at the bedside and in the hospital room. Lots of tears... The daughter who survived doesn't yet know that her sister died in the accident so I'm sure there will be some more tears when that is revealed.

The neighbor to the west, a new Catholic family that just moved in from California and have been taking the missionary lessons, learned of the accident but haven't known the family well enough to make a visit. I called to ask Teresa if she could explain to me which of several different events listed in the obituary I should attend since they all have different names. It was a sweet experience for me to ask for her help with a Catholic service when she has been trying to adjust to the way we Mormons do things in our meetings. Although she and her family have decided to not take the lessons for a while, I was grateful for the chance to ask her advice as I attend Mass this week with the Cruz family.

I thought I'd like to comment on our ward high priest group. We have Max Twiggs as our group leader and he and Nolan Furniss both have their own businesses and quite a bit of freedom in their daily schedules. When Maria and family moved into the ward, the quorum was aware that Maria's husband was in a construction accident about five years ago and has been in a rest home, comatose, ever since. The ward was alerted to the situation and between the high priests and the YW and YM, the Cruz's yard was leveled, raked, planted, mowed and cared for. Other service over the years has been given and the children have been pulled in to attend girls' camp and the son involved in scouting. They attended the Christmas party last December with Jackie Alvarez who is also Maria's V.T. and has sat in on several discussions. The minute Jackie heard of the accident she went to the hospital and was able to help Maria. Because of all the neighborly things that the ward has been doing for the last several years, now with this tragedy, they are able to step in. What a great thing! I have never seen a high priest quorum that functions like ours does. There isn't a widow in the ward that hasn't been helped when the need has arisen. I guess in some wards the high priests are less active, but in our ward, they are a force for good.

I just received a call from Deniece. She has been in the hospital with Mom most of the last two days and she said that she isn't doing very well. She isn't responding and mostly sleeps. They are taking her off of medication to see if it is affecting her adversely. They ran five different tests today to see if she has had a stroke or something else is going on but nothing showed up. The doctor thinks that she may be giving up; he is going to check her tomorrow morning and see if she is any better. If she isn't, Daddy, SaraKay and I are going to make a quick trip to SLC tomorrow.

Hopefully each of you have had a good Easter. As can be expected, our meetings were quite somber due to the news of the Cruz family. Stephani said that she took her mutual class to the cemetery for their lesson on the resurrection. She said it was a poignant experience to sit together and talk about the gift of the atonement and resurrection. I'm sure it was effective since just this past year their ward has lost one of its YW in an accident.

[Dad] Easter was a choice spiritual day for us. The neighborhood Easter bunny still did her thing, but with sugarless candies. There was such a rich outpouring of the spirit in our meetings. Patriarch Evans and his new wife were the speakers in Sacrament Meeting and the choir sang an Easter number. Sunday School was a little stressful because I was teaching. The lesson was about exaltation and was the concluding lesson from the Gospel Essentials manual. We talked about what exaltation is and the requirements to get there and the blessings for those who attain exaltation.

Saturday we got a lot of yard work done and were really pleased to get fertilizer spread and Bare Spot applied in preparation for the weekend storms to water in for us. Things look really good and we revel in our trees and the birds and squirrels that feed and cavort in our back yard. The only problem is a couple birds that insist on making a nest in the engine compartment of the pickup.

Friday night I went to the Pocatello office to help with a climbing instructor training that was being held--primarily for the purpose of training Cedar Badge staff that would be assisting with climbing and rappelling this summer. I spent most of the evening calling parents to get permission over the phone for their youth to participate because the kids hadn't brought the signed permission slips from home.

I have been trying to build a little more cohesion and closeness in my team--with the two fellows I supervise. I send out an email to them each day and then on Friday we have a conference call. A couple of the thoughts I sent out last week are: "It takes a real storm in the average person's life to make him realize how much worrying he has done over the squalls." --Unknown "Money isn't everything, but it sure keeps you in touch with your children." --J. Paul Getty

We are driving to Burley this afternoon to meet with Mike and are excited to see him. (Mike is interviewing with a practice in Burley today.)

P.S. from Mom: After being off her meds for 24 hours Grandma finally started acting like herself. She has started talking and even brushed her hair and teeth yesterday! Now that she seems to be strengthening, the decision has been made to send her to a rehab center for the next two months. I'm so grateful that she is coming around. The rehab for this surgery is tough; keep her in your prayers.

April 25, 2006

[Mom] Several of you have inquired about my stay with Grandma Ilene. I left here Thursday morning and arrived about noon at the care center. It is called HealthSouth and is on the corner of 80th South and 13th East. It is a beautiful facility, very clean and spacious and specializes in physical and occupational therapy. The residents are scheduled for therapy three times a day. There were residents as well as "outpatients" receiving therapy and it was interesting to be in the gym and see the therapists at work. Many of the patients were recovering from hip or knee surgery, others were stroke victims learning to walk again. The equipment was varied and there was a nice feeling of community since about 5-10 patients were in the gym simultaneously and each with his own personal therapist.

The first day I was there, Grandma could hardly get into a standing position during her session but by the third day, she was walking with a walker at the side of the therapist and went a distance of about 25 feet. I was amazed at her improvement in just three days and encouraged that maybe she can improve enough to be able to return home again in a few weeks.

It was nice to be there to visit with the attending physician and to help Grandma get adjusted to her surroundings. One day she had some problems with one of the antibiotics she was taking and her pain meds weren't strong enough so the doctor did some adjusting and she seemed

to get along a little better. It was hard to see how difficult her life has become since taking this fall. She was doing so well and has always been very careful and health-minded. Although she is doing much better, I seriously doubt that she will ever be able to completely regain her mobility and independence again.

I appreciated the opportunity to share in the care since Kathy and Deniece are usually the ones who give so much of their time and energy. This next week when we go to Tim's graduation, we will have some time with her and I am staying over on Saturday and will be with her for several hours before Tim comes through after taking his CPA exam that morning.

Several of you have asked regarding visiting and phoning. For this week Kathy feels like she is still too miserable to have guests or phone calls but starting next week Kathy will make up a schedule so that Grandma will have the phone on her tray and will be able to answer it. Up until now she hasn't wanted to even talk on the phone and so unless someone is there with her, it is useless to call.

On Wednesday night SaraKay won the piano competition at Crawford Cup. She won $100 and now has what she needs for her strings camp. It was a sweet night for her. Her Liszt piece was difficult but she really performed well and had lots of compliments. We regretted that Daddy couldn't be with us, but he was en route to SLC for a conference.

On Tuesday Daddy and I met Mike in Burley where he was interviewing for a job. It was so sweet to have the time with him and hear about Amber and Marci first hand. Of course, he brought some pictures and we loved seeing them. We have been so grateful that Marci's mom, Karen, is able to help with her recovery.

As a part of our trip, Mike took us to see Shoshone Falls near Twin Falls. The people at the clinic had mentioned that this year because of all the moisture we have received, the Falls are bigger than Niagara Falls--more water tumbling over the edge than even at Niagara. I couldn't imagine it until I saw it. What an amazing sight! We stood at the visitor's lookout for a long time just trying to absorb the force and might of the scene before us. At times the mist sprayed us and totally obscured the bottom of the falls it was so churning. It was fun to take that little detour and see it. I couldn't help but feel grateful for the Lord's tender mercies to us in sending Idaho the moisture that we need.

I arrived home Saturday evening and spent about three hours catching up on the news from SaraKay. One of the things she was telling me about was her puppet show in English class. The assignment had been made for the kids to take a few lines from a Shakespearian play and do some sort of a project. She chose to make a puppet show stage and then created six stocking puppets representing different characters in the play. She really had some funny looking puppets and we laughed about them as she got more and more detailed and they got more outlandish.

The night before I left for Utah, she was having second thoughts about doing it since she worried that the kids would think they were stupid but I encouraged her to get out of her comfort zone and go for it. Well, she did and they were a huge success! She had also attended the Continuous Scripture Reading fireside and it had been very inspirational. She is having some wonderful experiences that are helping her to strengthen her testimony.

I called Laurel this morning and she continues to wend her way through this time of trial and tears. There are so many complexities in the situation and she rightfully has her ups and downs. Fortunately, she and the children have daily contact with John, but nothing can replace a second parent to help with all the daily duties, especially with the children during the all-important supper hour and bedtime. Please continue to pray for them.

[Dad] The time with Mike was wonderful. It was great to see the location of the clinic where he would be if this move comes about and to spend the afternoon checking out the local real estate situation. We could sure get excited about having them closer.

We have choreographed our weekend in Provo for graduation. Working in time with Grandma Ilene, checking out Becky's cabin in Heber, and the primary purpose of our trip--Tim's graduation and convocation. He is taking the Part 1 of the CPA exam and wants to spend every available minute studying and preparing for that on Saturday morning.

Last week our Council staff drove to Salt Lake City on Wednesday night and spent Thursday in a cluster meeting with presenters from Western Region and National. On the way home, we

stopped at Maddox near Brigham City and had the most wonderful piece of meat I think I have ever had.

Saturday was the annual Council Recognition Night where we honor all the new Silver Beavers. I am grateful that we do this here at the Snake River High School Auditorium, but it means I have quite a bit of responsibility with keys, contacts, and clean up. We also have a Silver Beaver reception before the event with significant refreshments because the 25 or 30 that are being honored have been there since 4:30 rehearsing. And then we have a reception with light refreshments after the event with stations all around the commons area for those that are being honored so people don't have to go through a reception line, but can just go congratulate the individuals they know. They can mingle, have punch and cookies, and visit.

A great time for all but with the logistics and setup, take down, and clean up, it makes for a long day. All that time on my feet lifting and hauling is just about too much for an old man. But, we had about 750 Scouters and their families there and had a wonderful time. It is so affirming for me to review the years of service to youth by those that are being honored.

May 2, 2006

[Mom] We had a great weekend in Utah. We left on Thursday morning and arrived at HealthSouth at about 11:30. Grandma was just finishing up therapy when we got there and we had lunch with her while we visited. After lunch I asked her if she wanted me to put some curlers in her hair since she had just had her hair washed that morning. She said that she would so I dipped a comb in a cup of water and began setting her hair. At one point I mentioned that I wasn't sure we were getting the hair wet enough to get a good curl. SaraKay commented that she could just pour the glass of water over Grandma's head and then we would be sure to have the hair wet enough. Quick as a wink, Grandma retorted, "You do and you won't live to see another day!" We all had a good laugh over that response. I commented later that it was nice to know that Grandma is feeling like herself again! She continues to improve and walked around the gym twice during her therapy session as well as being able to get herself in and out of bed and to the bathroom unassisted.

After leaving Grandma's we arrived at Provo and went directly to the Marriott Center for Commencement. We arrived early enough that we got fairly good seats. As usual, the campus was gorgeous with beautiful flowering trees, tulip beds, and crowds of people taking pictures of their favorite graduate. It is always a thrill to be a part of BYU graduation and to be on the campus during the spring time when everything is in bloom.

Elder Hales of the Twelve was the keynote speaker as well as the one conducting. His advice to the graduates was to recognize that the Lord expects them to use their talents and resources to alleviate the suffering of the world's poor and displaced. He spoke against materialism and encouraged them to use their influence to bring about righteousness. The student who spoke representing the class was a music major who has published several compositions on the theme of peace and his remarks were very insightful. The music for the program was provided by the elite orchestra on campus led by Cory Katseanes. It was beautiful!

As the graduates filed out of the building Tim exited right by where we were sitting and we made a hasty exit and escaped without the traffic jams we usually get caught in. It was so fun to go to dinner and catch up on the news.

We met Mark and Rita at Sean and JoEllen's apartment on Friday morning and drove to Heber to see a cabin that the Seely's bought. The drive was beautiful! There is a new four-lane highway being built up through the canyon and the realtor told us that when that is completed the population in Heber is expected to mushroom. I can see why. It is a picturesque valley and homes and cabins are going up everywhere. I'm sure Becky and Chet will enjoy having a residence in such a pretty spot.

The reason we took Mark and Rita is that Mark may be doing some work on the cabin for them and we wanted to see if Becky and the kids could move right in when they arrive in June or if work needs to be done first. We met with the realtor, looked over the cabin, and returned to Provo in time for Mark and Rita to attend JoEllen's convocation at 2:00. It was really a fun trip and nice to see the Denver Larsen's.

By the time we arrived in Provo we had a phone call from Shauntel informing us that she, Rachel, Camille and Archie were on campus and going to have lunch at the Cougar Eat. We took a side trip to see Tim's stomping grounds, the Tanner Building, and then hurried to join Shaunnie and

kids for lunch. As you might suspect, with several convocations going on throughout the day, the Wilkinson Center was packed but we managed to find Shaunnie and sat together for lunch before returning to Tim's apartment to get changed for convocation.

After meeting up with Steve who had been in meetings that morning, we spent the next hour traipsing all over campus trying to get photos at all the famous spots. We were sure to get one of Tim in front of the stadium since he has certainly been a great fan of both the football and basketball teams. It was obvious that the kids were having as much fun as we were as we walked leisurely from site to site and just enjoyed the festive mood on campus.

After a fun meal at Cafe Rio following convocation, Daddy and SaraKay headed for home and I rode to Grandma's with Shaunnie and Steve and kids. They dropped me off and drove on to Logan. It had been a full and fun day. The next morning, I spent time with Grandma at HealthSouth until Tim picked me up en route home after taking his test. He took the first of four tests that must be passed in order to get his CPA designation. He is staying here with us and studying in preparation for the second one he will take in two weeks. He is determined to get these tests taken while his material is fresh in his mind. His job starts on June 12 and he knows that it will be harder to find time once he is working. It's been nice to have him around and we've had a great time.

En route home we stopped in at Don and Deniece's in Kaysville and visited for a while. They were having an open house later that night for Brent and Kari who were making a mad dash to Kaysville after Kari's graduation from nursing at BYU-I. The whole family was then traveling to Seattle for the wedding on Tuesday in the temple there. What a busy time for them. It has been complicated by the fact that Deniece has been very ill with the flu and struggling to get everything ready that she needed to have done for the open house.

[Dad] A great summation of our weekend. I was amazed at how much Archie enjoyed the afternoon and how well he got along with all our traipsing and activities. He and Camille and Rachel were an important part of our festivities and have grown so much--hopefully this experience will help to offset any influences they have living in Cache Valley toward that other school. (Not really, I am proud of the education ethic in our family--just think, 24 BYU degrees in our immediate family and every one of the sons will have advanced degrees.)

We have been working on membership issues and doing our semiannual inventory checks. I appreciate Sue's help with this effort--she is so good with these leaders.

Another priority has been ordering materials and recognitions for Cedar Badge. It is quite a process to have everything in place when the course opens--t-shirts, neckerchiefs, belts and buckles, berets, patches, jackets, manuals, and so on. We are getting ready for our final staff development this Saturday; we go on the hill in the middle of June.

May 10, 2006

[Mom] I visited with both John and Laurel today and continue to be grateful that our lives are connected even though we live so far apart.

Laurel spent several hours at the doctors today but said that despite all the tests and ultrasounds they do, there is just so much they can't know until Tessa arrives. Laurel said that they might induce labor about the 20th of June and then they will know whether Tessa will need the heart operation. Each day brings ups and downs. It has been a strain to live apart but they realize that that is the only option for now.

One sweet story that Laurel related to me. She had an especially difficult time on Sunday and when they arrived home from their meetings, she hadn't prepared anything very special for dinner. As they sat down to eat their spaghetti Emma said, "Oh, Mom, you must have read my mind! This is exactly what I hoped we would have!" Laurel said that Emma seems to sense her needs and steps up to ease the stress.

It's been nice to have Tim around although he studies about 10 hours each day so we don't see much of him. He went with his friend, Chad Christensen, to a BYU-I ward last Sunday and had fun. He is going with me on Thursday to Salt Lake when I go to help take care of Grandma. Tim's second test in the four-test CPA series is scheduled for Saturday morning in Linden. He still doesn't know if he passed the one, he took last week. He said that if he fails any one of the four tests, it will void all the others so the pressure is really on.

SaraKay's experience at state solo was both good and bad. Being with all the kids was really fun but her personal performance wasn't as good as she had hoped for. Linnea, who accompanied her, said that she did beautifully in her warm-ups but that her nerves got the best of her in front of the judge. I'm sure she'll look back on it and recognize that it's all a part of the learning process. On Thursday she has a piano competition at ISU against pianists from all over Idaho. This one isn't as important to her as Crawford Cup but Linnea has encouraged her and several of her friends to participate.

Several of you have asked regarding Grandma. Kathy brought her home to her condo yesterday. She will need 24-hour care for the next several weeks. We are encouraging extended family to call or drop by at her condo but the doctor suggests that no little children visit since her immune system is pretty delicate and he doesn't want to take a chance on her getting sick with a cold or flu. A phone call or card will let her know that you are thinking about her. We feel blessed with her speedy recovery and hope that she can take it slow and easy and eventually be more independent.

[Dad] Our lives are full and rewarding; sometimes I wish they weren't quite so full--I would like a little time to stop and smell the roses. Last week we had a ditch meeting to set the stage for use of the ditch this season. Then those of us that could, spent a couple hours on Friday burning the ditch. We hope to connect with a ditcher who can clean the ditch for us. We struck out there, so I hope everything works for the season and we can keep enough
flow for everyone to water effectively.

Friday and Saturday were big "Scouting for Waterways" camporees and cleanups. We had a Scout camporee at the Blackfoot Diversion on Friday night and Saturday where we cleaned up and hauled out about 15,000 pounds of garbage. As a District committee we fed the campers on Friday night and had a great campfire program. From 4:00 - 6:15, Sue and another lady were parked by the side of the road with the hood up and the flasher's going--they were on the route to the camporee. Everyone that stopped to see if she needed any help was given a token and told to bring it to the campfire that night. A dozen troops were rewarded with cookies for their "good deed." She said it was really an inspiring experience to have so many stop to see if they could help the "damsels in distress."

We had about 200 Cub Scouts at the Rose ponds to help clean up there on Saturday. At both locations--after the service was completed, we had games and activities that all enjoyed. The Cubs made plaster casts of animal tracks and other activities. The Scouts shot .22's, got lost with GPS units while following a designated route, and tested their team with the hot isotope game. Great weekend for scouting! In addition, I had a Cedar Badge staff development in Idaho Falls that I coordinated, answered questions, made decisions, and received fees.

May 17, 2006

[Mom] It's beautiful outside today with a gentle breeze and warm temperatures. For the first time this year, our walking group walked outside in the parking lot instead of in the Stake center gym. Maybe summer will arrive yet!

Several of you have inquired regarding Grandma Ilene. Tim and I left Thursday morning and arrived about 11:30. Deneice was the one on duty when we arrived and we had lunch together before she left for home. Tim set up his computer in the office and carried on with his studying on Thursday and Friday while I took Grandma to therapy, to the hospital for blood tests, and shopping for a new wheelchair. She gets around very well with her walker although she still doesn't have a lot of stamina when it comes to being on her feet for very long. She is able to do most things for herself and is mentally very sharp. It was nice to be able to have her giving me instructions while I did the legwork for her.

Between Kathy, Deniece, and I we are trying to have someone there 24/7 for now. Kathy thinks that by next week she will be able to be on her own again. I think her recovery is nothing short of miraculous. It has just been a month since her accident!

When we arrived at Grandma's I asked Deniece how the wedding in Seattle had gone. I knew that all the immediate family were going to be there for the occasion. Although sibling spouses and grandchildren didn't fly in for the event, the kids were all there and Deniece and Don rented a large home to use while they were in Seattle which made for a cozy arrangement. Deniece said that just a little while before the wedding, they received a phone call from Katie's husband, Lance, who was home caring for their little boy, Anderson, who is about 16 months old. He recounted an amazing story!

Lance had taken Anderson to a park to play while he sat on a nearby park bench. Two men approached, one grabbing Anderson and running for a car, the other putting a gun to Lance's head and demanding money. The car sped off, leaving Lance petrified for his son's welfare and distraught, to say the least. The man made it clear that unless Lance gave him money that Lance's own life would be taken. For over an hour, Lance pleaded for his life and Anderson's, trying to convince the gunman that he was a poor college student and that he didn't have any money except a ten-dollar bill that was in his wallet. He did offer the man his credit cards and car but to no avail.

After about an hour the car returned and the two men conferred. Lance could hear Anderson crying in the back seat of the car and he again pleaded for their lives. Finally, the two men got in the car and started to leave. Lance ran after the car and Anderson. After going just a short distance, the car stopped and the baby was put out of the car and it sped away. The whole ordeal had taken over an hour and left father and son shaken, but grateful for their miraculous deliverance.

Lance met with the police and gave them a profile of the two assailants. His call to the family in Seattle left everyone stunned but so grateful for the Lord's watch care over them. As one can imagine, it has evoked a lot of gratitude and tears each time the story is recounted and the alternative considered. We are so grateful for their safety and preservation!

Several of you have inquired regarding Tim's test on Saturday. I asked him to take a minute and give an update on that. (This is Tim, now. Mom asked me to add a paragraph about my test. I took the second of four on Saturday. I've told some of you about it but I can pretty much guarantee I didn't pass this part, so I will reschedule for July. I will take another part the day after Memorial Day. For this section, I felt like I simply focused my attention on areas that weren't covered and didn't prepare sufficiently for other areas that were heavily tested. The areas my review course stated would comprise up to 50% of the test did not have a single question on the exam. And the area the course said would have between 8-20% had at least 30 questions. Also, I just ran out of time and wasn't able to complete a major portion of the test so that's why I know I will be retaking this part. Anyway, not much else to report. I'm really enjoying being at home and the convenience of just surfacing to eat meals and then being able to continue studying.)

I would like to add that we have thoroughly enjoyed having Tim here. We figured out that Tim had not been home a single summer since the one after his high school graduation. He started selling pest control after his first year at BYU-I and has done that or an internship every summer since except for his two-year mission time. No wonder it seems so nice to have him around! SaraKay has especially enjoyed the time with a sibling in the house. Last night we burned the branches and leaves from our spring yard clean-up and then had a wiener roast for FHE. We sat in our new lawn swing and enjoyed an absolutely beautiful summer, windless, evening!

Tonight is the high school spring choir concert. SaraKay has been so excited about it; lots of fun songs, costumes, and choreography. There will be four performances and hopefully lots of support from the community. Last Thursday Daddy took her to her performance at ISU in the Mark Neiwirth Competition. She played three numbers...two well and one she bombed out on. She really wasn't too disappointed since she has been tired of competing, but three of Linnea's students were invited back to perform on Saturday at the final concert. She attended to support her friends and was surprised to find that the piece she competed with last year, "Autumn" took first place in the advanced division. Becky will appreciate that since it is the song she won Jr. Miss with. Anyway, we are all grateful to have all the recitals and festivals over and put it away for the summer.

[Dad]Monday night was so fun--to have everything cleaned up and burned and then to roast hot dogs and marshmallows on the coals and relax in our beautiful backyard. We are so enjoying our shady yard. Saturday I assembled the yard swing that we picked up to replace our old swing courtesy of John and Laurel.

May 26, 2006

[Mom] I returned home last night too late to vote. It's the first time since turning 21 that I haven't voted! I didn't realize until too late that I was going to be with Grandma in SL and would miss the primaries. Most of the people we wanted to win, won. The only exception was DaLon Esplin who we were supporting for the District 7 judgeship. He had good support but came up short.

You may be interested to know that Jim Marriott took Joe Cannon's spot and Steve Bair took Stanley Williams' spot in the House. We felt very

good about both of them. It has been interesting that for the last 25-30 years the Bingham County reps have all been from Blackfoot and Snake River area. Hardly an exception to that. There was an article in the Morning News about the political tradition of this area and about the quality of people that we send to Boise. Nice to hear those kind words and feel like we have helped build that tradition.

My stay with Mother was more difficult this time. When I went with Tim two weeks ago Grandma was jovial and talkative. When I arrived last Sunday, Deniece met me at the front door and I could tell by the look on her face (and the tired look in her eyes) that things weren't good. Grandma had caught a flu bug and had been up all night vomiting. She couldn't keep anything down and Kathy was concerned enough that Deniece was getting ready to take Grandma to the hospital. They were worried that she was getting dehydrated. It was so disheartening. Fortunately, about noon on Sunday she stopped vomiting and was able to get some sleep. During the whole time I was there, she only sat in her chair to eat and then went right back to bed.

When I called this morning Deniece said that she seems to be perking up and getting her appetite back. Tomorrow Kathy is going to leave her on her own for a few hours and see how she gets along. Her pain with her hip has mostly subsided so now it is a matter of getting and keeping her well. Her immune system is so weak right now that we are trying to keep her isolated until she strengthens. I guess there has been an outbreak of flu in the SL area and she must have picked it up at the therapist since that is the only place she has been in the last three weeks.

School is winding down and summer is on the horizon. The weather is getting more reliable and we've had some absolutely beautiful evenings. Tim continues to study for his test on the 30th in Boise. His usual schedule is to study all day and then come upstairs about the time SaraKay arrives home from school. Today they were joking around and bantering back and forth and I thought about how history repeats itself.

Years ago when Tim was about 12-13 years old he would get home from school and one of the first things he would yell was, "SaraKay, I'm home. Come bother me." Well, lately it's the same only reversed. When SaraKay walks in the back door, she says to Tim, "Hey, I'm home. Come bother me!" And he does and I just sit back and laugh at the two of them.

Now for our holiday plans. We will be spending most of the weekend here but leave about 1:00 for Burley on Monday to see Mike and Marci who are driving from WA to house hunt. It will be the first time we've seen Amber and we are excited. Hopefully they can get something lined up. We are looking forward to spending some time with them as well as getting reacquainted with Marci's folks who will also be joining them for the afternoon.

I imagine that Jenny and Laurel are counting down the days at this point. I know John has it narrowed down to two weeks and one day as of this morning when he will be winging to Ohio and reunited with the family. Remember Jenny, Laurel, and Grandma in your prayers.

P. S. I forgot to mention that my good friend, Carmonie Russell called and offered us their organ for free! They are expecting another baby and don't have room for it in their small home. I accepted it gladly but only on the condition that we would babysit it until they are able to get a larger home or until their oldest, Jed, leaves for college and there is room again for it. We had a terrible time figuring out how to make it fit but eventually got it situated. It is quite large and has two large speakers that go with it and have to be right by it so it was no small trick to find a spot.

Several days after we moved it in, I was talking to Carmonie and reminding her that it was only on loan and she admitted that her husband, Brett, really has had a hard time accepting the fact that they were giving it away. It has been a part of their family longer than their oldest child and he loved to hear Carmonie play it. Knowing that made me grateful that we found a solution that will be beneficial to us all.

[Dad] Every week it seems like we have a new drama with the water. Tim has been amazed at how much communication the ditch takes to keep the water moving and to keep the peace with neighbors. Everything looks so green and pretty. Last week I used the weed chopper and cleaned up all the fence rows and along the road and it really made a big difference in how things looked. Work has been much of the usual and the details are coming together for Cedar Badge. I just received word on my donations of flour and sugar for the Tiger Ear booth this year and so we are progressing on that front as well. I made up the agenda for staff meeting next week and sent it

out and had a Key 4 meeting with my district leadership. I spent a couple nights calling and tracked down a few more boys but it doesn't look like I will be able to meet my membership goals by the end of June. This year FOS has fallen short by about $4,000 but I just printed out a report on previous donors that have not given yet this year and with those that gave over $50 there is a potential of $8,200. It just takes an organized effort to follow up and contact those individuals.

We sure miss Sue when she goes to be with her mom but we are glad we are able to share her with Ilene and do our part to help Kathy and Deniece--they are so faithful in caring for their mother. Tim and SaraKay are so good about cleaning up that we always have a clean kitchen and a dishwasher full while Sue is gone.

May 29, 2006

[Mom] Friday night we went to the temple to do baptisms for the dead. There were about 30 adults who attended and we did baptisms and confirmations for about 250 people. The names were some submitted by Brad Harper and the Tominagas and so it was very touching for Richard and JoAnn to have their family names being done by ward members.

The original idea of the adults doing a baptismal session was to involve ward members who aren't endowed but who are working towards going to the temple. When all was said and done, we didn't pull in any that fit that description but all of us who attended were grateful. We took Tim with us and enjoyed having him there, too.

Before going to the temple, we stopped by the Idaho Falls cemetery and decorated the graves of Grandma Gooch and her two brothers. My Uncle Don, Grandma Ilene's brother, sent me money this year to get flowers for all three graves and it was sweet to take a minute to visit the graves and share a little of their history with Tim. Today we visited Grandpa and Grandma Larsen's graves and left a floral arrangement but the weather was so cold and rainy that we didn't tarry very long. I think it is the first time we have decorated their graves wearing winter coats!

It doesn't seem possible that June is just around the corner! School is winding down and we're happy about that. Tim's job starts June 12th so he is getting anxious to find housing and get his move made. Tomorrow after spending time with us in Burley he will continue on to Boise, spend the night with Dave and Andrea, take his test Tuesday morning, apartment hunt, and then head home and study for his July 1st test. He has yet to get any scores so he's not sure how he's done but he is carrying on with his plans.

The other night we were talking about how hard it is to find housing in Boise when we aren't connected with the young adult culture there. It dawned on us that Becky's friend from BYU, Michelle DuBois, was teaching institute at the university and we called her and she was excited to know that Tim was coming and said that she would find him a good situation and call him back. She is going to check all week with her classes. Bingo! What a big relief! Tim had been checking on the internet for apartments but didn't want to get some roommates that were into drinking and smoking. Michelle has always been the kind of a person that is very "connected" and we are so grateful for her help.

I called Grandma this morning and she is doing well and pretty much able to be on her own. Kathy and Deniece help her in the evenings and she handles things during the day. She sounded happy to be able to take care of herself again. Our prayers continue with her.

[Dad] This has sure been a cold wet miserable Memorial Day weekend. We got the lawn mowed this morning, however. And everything looks so green and beautiful. We have been watching the birds on the feeder in the backyard and have so enjoyed watching the variety of birds and the social interaction between them. We just got back from Burley and had a delightful visit with Mike and Marci and her parents, the Belliston's. We got to hold Amber and admire her--we are so blessed with such a bunch of beautiful grandkids!

Brother Barnard, the YM president, asked me to speak at the Father and Son's outing this weekend. After pondering the subject and how to handle it I asked Dan Hawkes, Bruce Ellis and Tim to help me with a quartet of "Brightly Beams Our Father's Mercy" to introduce it and have been working on a fifteen-minute talk on "Our Sacred Priesthood Trust"--the same as President Monson's talk in the General Priesthood session of conference.

Saturday was so wet and cold we couldn't do any yard work so Sue prevailed upon me to get some organizing done in the storage room down stairs. We cleaned out a bunch of stuff and after all the organizing we actually have some room for additional storage now. After that I also cleaned 1/2 of the garage. We had hamburgers cooked

on the grill for lunch today and Saturday night we had steaks, salads, and potato wedges. What a party it is around here!

June 6, 2006

[Mom] DADDY IS LEAVING NEXT WEDNESDAY FOR CEDAR BADGE AND WILL BE SPENDING THE FATHER'S DAY HOLIDAY AT CAMP SO THIS SUNDAY IS GOING TO BE OUR FATHER'S DAY. PLEASE CALL HIM OR SEND A CARD SO THAT WE CAN CELEBRATE DESPITE HIM BEING GONE THE FOLLOWING SUNDAY.

I appreciated the update Laurel gave in her recent family letter. It will be a relief when John arrives and they are united again as a family. I have so appreciated the support and love shown them by Ken and Marilyn. It is never easy to join families under one roof and the McAllisters have been so sweet and accommodating through the last several weeks. Our prayers are for the Lord's tender watch care to be over them.

In one week, Paul and Jenny will be adding a new member of their family, and our prayers are for them as well. Jenny's mom will be helping with the transition and I will be flying out on July 1st to spend a few days, too. They are planning to visit here and in UT the last weeks of July and attend the Johnson reunion as well as bless the baby. We are excited to see them and spend some time together.

Grandma Ilene is "flying solo" for the most part. Kathy goes over in the evenings and helps her with the bedtime routine and also helps her shower and take care of light housekeeping chores. Deniece goes on Thursday and helps with grocery shopping and other duties. She is strengthening although the flu bug continues to give her trouble. She is seldom without an upset stomach and light nausea and doesn't have the stamina she would like to have. We are just grateful that she is able to be at home and so is she. She keeps her life pretty simple and that seems to be the secret at this stage of her life. She often asked about each of you and she has appreciated the cards and letters many of you have sent.

SaraKay and I worked at Gorder's Honey for three days (3/hr/day) last week and we will do the same this week. We work together putting labels on honey jars and get paid by the label. It has been very pleasant work and we get in a lot of visiting as well as listening to music. I think Eddie is happy with the job we're doing and hopefully he will keep us busy throughout the summer. SaraKay will work alone when she does other jobs for him but for now, we are both helping out and it has worked well for us. We have wondered how Katie is getting along at the SnoShak and hoping that it's going well for her, too. (On chat Sunday Steph said that Katie is doing well with her summer job and even getting some tips!)

We have a new member of our family. It's a cello that SaraKay is using for the summer. She has been practicing on her own and is having a great time with it, except that her hand gets so tired from stretching to the different positions. We got the organ running and it has been heavenly to hear the hymns played!

Tonight we are going to Shannon's house to help celebrate Rachel's birthday with cake and ice cream. She and Chrissy are visiting their Benson Grandma and we are going to have them stay the night with us and then I'll take them home tomorrow. Steve went with Bonnie's dad and brothers for a Men's trip and is in the Seattle area enjoying a short reprieve from work and responsibilities. They have plans to take the ferry to Vancouver and tour the Butchart Gardens as well as the Space Needle.

Tim leaves on Saturday for his new job in Boise. He has located a basement apartment in a lovely home that even has a swimming pool. He will have one roommate and it sounds like the singles ward and other facilities are close at hand. He found out he passed his first CPA exam. He is pretty sure he didn't pass the second but he hasn't received word yet. He is excited for all the changes coming and looking forward to his new job. As for us, we have absolutely loved having him around for a few weeks.

Sunday night we sat on our new lawn swing and just talked and laughed and relished being together. He has brought so much life and humor into our home and we can hardly stand the thought of him leaving us. I know Dave and Andrea will be a good respite from the pressures of work for him and I'm sure he will be glad to have all this studying done and some of his tests passed. We wish him well.

SaraKay and I are leaving Sunday afternoon at five and will be gone until Saturday afternoon, the 17th. We will be in Boise for the week-long BSU music camp. SaraKay will be attending with Laurel and we will be staying with Dave and Andrea. Dave will be out of town for the week and I am going to help get the kids back and forth

each day and help Andrea with the extra workload. Remember that Daddy leaves on Wednesday for camp so no one will be here from Wednesday on.

[Dad] Yesterday was a full Sabbath. I dread the thought of Tim leaving us and being over in Boise but I am grateful that he will have Dave Andrea when he feels the need for family.

A couple of my district volunteers and I met with the Stake Presidency of the Blackfoot South Stake last night. It was a valuable visit and I felt like we were able to cover a lot of ground and answer many of their questions and hopefully, it will help to shore up their support of Scouting. We had a similar visit with the Blackfoot West Stake Presidency last week. I appreciate my new District Chairman--Wayne Mikesell and how aggressive he has been about going after these visits.

Saturday was Blue Badge training at the twin University Stake Centers in Pocatello. This is where we train all new district leaders and motivate and commit them to a greater effort in strengthening the Scouting program. It was a great success with about 160 there. I was responsible for name tags and lining up Father John to pray and give some remarks, and taking Don Carlson's place in 1 1/2 hours of instruction of Advancement Chairmen. After cleaning up afterwards, I went to Old Town Embroidery to pick up all the Cedar Badge clothing that they had been either screen printing or embroidering.

Last Tuesday we had our monthly staff meeting. I made up the agenda to have us out by 12:30, but it didn't work. We were lucky to get out by 3:30. The rest of the week has been a blur. On Friday Tim and I went to the Father & Son's outing down by the river at Jim Marriott's. Yours truly was the speaker for the fireside and I pulled in Tim, Brother Ellis, and Dan Hawkes to help sing "Brightly Beams Our Father's Mercy," to help set the stage for my talk. The subject I had been given was, "Our Sacred Priesthood Trust." We had only practiced our song once last Sunday and it took us the first stanza to get it together--but from then on it sounded pretty good.

June 27, 2006

[Mom] It's been two weeks since I last wrote due to our trip to Boise and then to problems with our computer. It has been such an eventful two weeks that it was frustrating to feel so out of touch without our email working. Fortunately, Daddy (and his computer) arrived home Saturday night about 8:30. Both were a welcome sight.

On Saturday evening, June 10th, while Paul and Jenny were attending the Saturday night session of stake conference, Jenny started into labor. Several hours later at 1:45 a.m. she delivered Sophia Larsen, weighing in at 7 pounds. Both mom and baby are doing well. Paul was able to take off from work for the week and he and Jenny handled the home front until her mother, Lauri, and sister, Hannah, arrived to give some welcomed relief. Beth, or course, is fascinated with her new sister but Ben still has a few reservations about it all and is taking a little longer to be won over. Lauri and Hannah have been so helpful and eased Jenny's recovery.

On Wednesday, June 21st, Laurel was scheduled to have a c-section at 9:50 a.m. but when it was discovered that Tessa had turned and was in position for a regular delivery, the doctors rescheduled for 1:00. Due to another delay the time was pushed back to 6 p.m. and Tessa was delivered at about 1:57 a.m., weighing 7 lb. 6oz. After checking Tessa's heart, it was determined that she would need surgery and so she was transferred to Cincinnati Children's Hospital where she underwent surgery to correct the coarctation of her heart. The surgery went well and on Sunday morning they removed most of the tubes and apparatus that she was hooked up to. She will be in I.C.U. for several days as they need to monitor her carefully. If she can get through the next few days without getting infection, she may be able to come home as soon as this weekend. We are elated with Tessa's positive prognosis and appreciate all the fasting and prayers that were offered on her behalf.

As most of you are aware, SaraKay and I left on June 11th for Boise. We rode with Jed and his dad, Brett Russell, who were also attending the camp. They delivered us to Dave's door and even joined us for supper and some visiting before they left for Brett's brother's place where they were staying for the week. Early the next morning we were all up and Laurel and SaraKay got ready for their first big day of camp. Each day they had classes starting at 8:00 a.m. and they were through at 8:30 p.m. It made for a long day but included time for meals, bowling, and other activities.

On Monday Dave drove them to the BSU campus and helped get them checked in. Later that day Andrea showed me the way to get to the campus and I was the chauffeur for the rest of the week. The round trip took nearly an hour and I would often take Joseph, Chantelle, or Anna with

me as well as occasionally taking McKay who was such a good, pleasant traveler.

On Monday we took the children to a park to celebrate Anna's birthday and just before we left Joseph and McKay made one last trip down the slide and somehow McKay's little foot got tucked under his body and he got hurt. At first, we weren't sure just what had happened but as the day wore on, we could see that he was favoring that leg and wouldn't put his weight on it when he was standing next to the couch. Andrea consulted her friend who was a nurse and she suggested giving him some baby Motrin and waiting until morning to see if he improved.

David left for a business trip Monday afternoon so he wasn't there to consult but by Tuesday morning Andrea decided to take him in for x-rays. There wasn't a break but the doctor suspected that he had wrenched his knee and would just have to give it some time to heal. We were grateful that there wasn't anything more serious but it was still enough to cause him discomfort for the balance of the week.

SaraKay and Laurel enjoyed the camp although by week's end they were ready for a break. On Friday night there were recitals and an awards concert. It was a nice surprise when Laurel received the "Outstanding Piano Student" award and SaraKay received the "Outstanding Vocal Student" award. They both downplayed the awards since there were only about 12 students in each category, but I still think it was sweet for them to do so well.

I was happy to share the work of getting kids back and forth, making lunches, and helping Andrea. I took the kids swimming several times at the pool, took McKay for his daily stroller ride, and entertained kids in the backyard. We even hosted Tim for a birthday dinner on Thursday and got to see his apartment and meet his roommate and landlord. Needless to say, it was a fun week and a nice break from the work and pressures here at home. It was also easy to be gone since I knew that Daddy was at Cedar Badge and not missing us.

We really appreciated Dave and Andrea's hospitality. When they learned that I had a new bike but had never ridden it, they organized a family bike hike and loaned me a bike with gears so that I could learn how to shift them. David had a carrier that he pulled behind his bike and the rest of us rode solo. We went to a nearby cemetery which gave us lots of road area with a minimum of traffic as well as on a trail next to a canal with lots of shade trees. It was really a fun time. At one point we were riding along visiting and we could hear Chantelle sitting in the carrier singing Primary songs to McKay and we had to smile. I thought to myself, "It doesn't get much better than this."

We arrived home Saturday afternoon to an empty house. Daddy still had seven days left of Cedar Badge so SaraKay and I assumed the role of mower, waterer, weeder, and everything else that needed to be done around the place. We worked at Gorder's Honey in the mornings and took care of things here in the afternoons. We had lots of phone calls keeping us updated on the new babies and what was happening and we appreciated that.

Becky arrived in Heber on Tuesday night and she got her computer up and going and has felt more connected. She will be here on Sunday and then Dad and SaraKay will help her get things out of storage and moved to the cabin on Monday. I will be flying out of SL on Saturday to visit Paul and Jenny and the new little one.

Tim received word today that he passed the first three CPA exams and he will have his final one this Saturday. He is elated to know that he is nearly finished with it and can put that worry to rest. He has been called to be on the stake activities committee for the single's stake but hasn't felt very welcomed in his own ward yet. He studies every evening and hasn't had a chance to mix with other ward members at their weekly FHE or sports night so hopefully once he is through with his test, he will be able to attend some socials and feel more a part of things. He has seen several girls that he thought he'd like to ask out so that is encouraging.

I continue to be grateful for Grandma Ilene's recovery. She is nearly completely over her hip surgery and the nausea and problems with the flu are slowly abating, too. She is on her own with Kathy and Deniece helping her with shopping, cleaning, and other tasks. This Friday Daddy and I are going to spend the night with her before I catch a plane to Madison.

Dad and SaraKay will spend the Fourth with Becky and then Daddy will pick me up at the airport late Wednesday night and SaraKay will help Becky in Heber until they come on Friday night or Saturday for a week's visit. On Saturday we will host Becky and hopefully Stephani and her kids,

too. SaraKay will have a good group here for her 16th birthday!

By the way, our porch swing got a good workout the other night when James Hill dropped in to visit SaraKay and Daddy answered the door and sent James out the patio doors to join her on the swing. They had a great time visiting in the cool of the evening. Later when James left, I reminded SaraKay that she had said she would never sit on the swing with a boy since that was always an activity reserved for couples who were serious. She had to eat her words!

[Dad] The past two weeks have really flown for me. It was lonely to be here alone for several days after Sue and SaraKay left for Boise. I was able to get a lot done, however, and left the yard and garden in good shape for when they came back. I left for Cedar Badge at Treasure Mountain Scout Camp on Wednesday and was pretty much involved up to my eyebrows for the next 11 days. We had a great staff and they were well prepared for the course. We had several interesting campfires and activities as part of the staff preparation.

Feeding 150 people in the lodge is always a challenge, but everyone pitches in and helps with preparations, cleanup, and so on. It is always impressive to see the staff in full uniform around the flag pole and I was able to play "To The Colors" for every flag raising and "Retreat" for retrieving the flag each evening. A former advisor to Cedar Badge who had been associated with it for 24 years, Don Larsen from Idaho Falls, passed away on Friday and we flew our flags at half-mast for the rest of the course in honor of him.

On Saturday we had a special memorial flag ceremony under the direction of Mike Doyle, a part of the National Guards Honor Guard, complete with bagpipes playing "Amazing Grace" and then presented the flag to a grandson of Don's who was on staff for the family.

Those kinds of activities really help to raise your level of appreciation for our country, the flag, and the freedoms that we enjoy. That night we had a special campfire with Glen Rawson (Sounds of Sunday on KBLI and teaches at the institute at ISU) and he spoke about patriotism telling some poignant stories about individuals and incidents surrounding the Declaration of Independence and the Revolutionary War. The bottom line of his message was the importance of each one of us making the right decisions and taking the stands necessary to preserve our freedoms.

On Sunday most of us went to Sacrament Meeting in the Driggs 3rd ward and heard the report of a recently returned missionary. We always arrive early, park at the farthest away parts of the parking lot, set up chairs in the cultural hall so that we don't impinge on ward members and where they are used to sitting, help with the sacrament, put away the chairs after, and sweep the cultural hall before returning to camp. We also made arrangements for several other staff members that aren't LDS to attend their meetings or to worship as they chose.

Upon arriving back in camp, we have a "Scout's Own," a type of nondenominational worship service instituted by Baden Powell and as chaplain, of course, I was in charge of that. We had each troop, team, and crew take part with an element of the service and it is always a rich and rewarding experience to be able to worship in an outdoor "chapel."

While we were there, a young doe joined us for a few minutes. She came out of the woods into a clearing about 60 feet away, watched us for about 20 seconds and then quietly slipped away. We had another campfire that afternoon with speakers David Smith, our council president, and Brian Parker, a business consultant who each did a great job of motivating and inspiring the staff. Then we retired a huge flag that was ragged and faded and needed to be disposed of. All in all, a great and inspiring day.

On Monday, we awoke to heavy dark clouds and thunder and lightning. While we were eating an early breakfast, it began to rain. So, we all gathered back in the lodge and had a prayer together that the weather would be conducive to the activities and objective of the course. Almost immediately it began to clear, we had a few little scattered showers lasting just a few seconds, and then the weather the rest of the week was wonderful!!

With "no shows" and "walk ons" we ended up with 333 participants for the week. I was so impressed with the staff and the efforts they made to reach out to individuals who were having a struggle and the great training and teaching they did. It is hard to believe putting on 10 Wood Badge courses at the same time–that is what it is like. We fill the camp and have a great time. Every moment is planned and filled with meaningful activities and training. We had special speakers such as Frank Vandersloot (whose grandson, Jacody, was a participant), the number one and

two managers from the INEL, Blaine Larsen–a prominent and successful farmer, and others who reinforce the leadership principles being taught. It is a remarkable experience that I wish all my grandkids could have.

July 12, 2006

[Mom] It has been two eventful weeks since my last letter. We continue feeling grateful for the safe arrival of both Sophia and Tessa Jane. It was amazing that despite the heart surgery Tessa was able to go home within a week of her birth and join the rest of the kids at the McAllister home. She and Laurel both had a few rough nights trying to get the nursing process going especially since the long incision on Tessa's back was tender and holding her to nurse was difficult. Fortunately, babies heal quickly and she soon was able to be held without too much discomfort. The team of doctors at the hospital will need to continue seeing Tessa to monitor her progress but she has made great strides and we are very encouraged.

The weekend of July 1-4 was busy. SaraKay qualified to attend the outings planned by the bishopric as a reward for reading the Book of Mormon and other goals. It was a series of activities including water skiing and visiting a large cave out in the desert. The cave experience was the most memorable. If any of you have visited a cave, you can appreciate how effective it was as an object lesson relating to the gospel and Christ as the Light of the World. SaraKay said it was so thought-provoking when they all sat in the cave and turned off their flashlights and felt the heavy, deep darkness. All in all, she had a wonderful weekend.

On Friday night Daddy and I drove to SLC and stayed with Grandma Ilene so that he could help me get to the airport for my 6 a.m. flight Saturday morning. It was fun to have a few hours with Grandma. She continues to use a walker but she has improved so much from the last time I was there and I was reminded again of the Lord's goodness to us in preserving her.

Saturday morning, I flew to Madison and arrived about noon. I had a short layover in Minneapolis but was truly amazed at how quickly the flights went. Paul, Beth, and Ben were there to meet me and we were soon on our way to their place in Madison. What fun for me to be a part of their family for the next five days! Although Ben wasn't too quick to warm up to me, Beth and I got along fine and my time with Sophia was wonderful. She is such a contented baby and just ate and slept. We had several outdoor barbeques, worked in their garden, attended Sunday meetings with them, visited Paul's lab and office and saw his projects, met many of their close friends, visited a wonderful zoo, went picnicking and paddle boating on a beautiful lake on the Fourth of July, attended a fireworks display, and had an all-around great time! Jenny and I took the two oldest to swimming lessons on Monday and Wednesday at a new pool complex and then spent time in one of the many beautiful parks in the area. We also watched fireflies and enjoyed the amazing Midwest scenery!

The lake we visited was surrounded by the most beautiful deciduous forest as was the large area where they have a garden plot. The university owns some land that looks like it has been carved out of the forest and students get small plots for their personal use. While we were there working several other families came and tended their plots, too. It was so fun to see the patchwork of the different gardens and to be able to enjoy the fresh fruits and vegetables from a garden even though they are living in an apartment and don't have their own land. Madison is truly an exemplary city in many respects and it was fun to broaden my horizons a little by spending some time there.

While I was in Madison Daddy and SaraKay and Becky spent Monday moving many of Becky's things out of her Idaho Falls storage area and driving to Heber and getting them moved into the cabin. Dot and Bruce brought the kids and met them there that night. On the Fourth they enjoyed being at the cabin and Daddy did some projects for Becky. The contractors have been hard at work getting the basement finished, the cement cut out for the large windows in the basement, the stairs to the downstairs built, and framing in the rooms. On Wednesday Becky and kids with SaraKay riding shotgun dropped Daddy off at Grandma's and had a brief visit with her before continuing on to Idaho. Daddy grabbed a nap at Grandma's and then met me at the airport at 11:00 p.m. and we headed for home, arriving about 2:30 a.m.

Becky has been here for the past week and we have thoroughly enjoyed having them around. On Sunday afternoon Lindsay, Steph and three arrived and we had a barbeque and let the kids run wild. Partway through the evening Uncle Staff paid us a surprise visit and we invited him to join us for the family recital we had planned. He was a good sport about it all and we had an evening of

performances by the grandkids including singing and numbers on an oboe, cello, violins, and piano. I really appreciated the grandkids' willingness to perform. I know these family recitals aren't always popular with the kids but us adults had a great time. Steph and Linds and kids left after lunch on Monday and Becky and kids left this morning for Heber.

The only downside of the week was that Larsen fell and hit his head and had to have 8 staples to close the gash and then on Sunday night J. Cole fell on the trampoline and fractured his elbow and has his left arm in a sling. He has been so good to be careful and seems to be doing pretty good with it. Although two injuries is two too many, the kids were on the trampoline about 14 hours out of every 24 and I was amazed we didn't have anything else happen.

SaraKay left yesterday for Girls Camp. She is a junior leader and has really put a lot of time in preparing her presentations and handouts as well as treats, etc. She was so excited about it and her room has been piled high this past week as she has packed and gathered in preparation. She will be arriving home Saturday afternoon. We have had some rain and hoped that they are weathering all right at Pasa la Coma. She and I will start work again next week following our two-week vacation. She is anxious to finish pulling things together for the school year.

Best close and get some supper on. When Daddy came home for lunch and it was just the two of us, he said, "Boy, it's sure quiet around here!" I spent the morning in the garden. Hopefully my tomatoes and peas will be on by the time Paul and Jenny and Mike and Marci arrive the end of July. Mike and Marci will be moving at the end of this month and take possession of their home on August 3rd. They will be to Sophia's blessing on the 30th of July at Randy and Shauntel's and then get themselves settled in the following weeks. Mike starts at the Burley clinic on August 14th. We're excited to have them back!

Tim took his final CPA exam on July 1st and is awaiting word of his score. He is relieved to have this part nearly completed and not have to keep worrying about it. He spoke in church on Sunday and has been feeling a little more at home with his ward. Last night he called and asked Becky, "Guess who is standing here beside me?" He was on a date and his date had taken him to meet her grandparents. When they learned that he was a Larsen from Blackfoot they asked if he knew a Rebecca Larsen. Sure enough! It was Becky's mission president who was Tim's date's grandparents! Small world.

[Dad] I don't really have much to add to what Sue has shared. There has been a lot of bookkeeping, cleanup, and sorting things out to recuperate from Cedar Badge. We had a large printing bill at Printcraft Press and I negotiated a $2,000 adjustment. There was also a huge pile of lost and found to sort through and send out to identifiable owners. One big project was rewiring and putting in a new pump in a swamp cooler to be able to cool off the Blackfoot Scout Office. As warm as it has been, it was unbearable without a little coolant. We also have a new entry to the office including tile in the entryway that has really improved the looks of things. I also have a few left-over Magellan GPS units that are worth nearly $300 retail for sale at $110 if anyone is interested.

July 20, 2006

[Mom] It's Monday morning and SaraKay and I are leaving for work in a few minutes. We've taken the last two weeks off and now we've got to get out of vacation mode and start getting ready for school. We are looking forward to the next couple of weeks and the chance to have Paul and Jenny and Mike and Marci arrive.

As Jenny said in her letter, they are flying out tomorrow and will spend the next two weeks attending reunions and visiting family in Utah and Idaho. We are looking forward to their visits and appreciate their sacrifices to be with family. Next year at this time they will probably be on their way to Paul's new job, wherever that will take them. They are finding that most of the Chemical Engineering jobs are near large metropolitan areas so we feel like we will be lucky to get them anywhere near the family. They are understandably excited to finish up and get into the workplace, although Paul told me when I visited that working on his doctorate had been so much like having a regular job that he doesn't consider himself a student. I'm grateful that he is happy with what he is doing and feels like it was the right field for him!

As most of you may be aware, Andrea is in her 13th week of pregnancy and last Wednesday and Thursday was experiencing cramping and bleeding. She immediately went to bedrest and on Thursday David called and asked if we would join them in a fast. By Thursday night the bleeding and cramping had stopped but the

doctor still recommended very limited activity and bedrest. It has come at a tricky time for them since Laurel was leaving on Tuesday for Girl's Camp but David said that Anna is rising to the challenge and prepared to take care of the home front until he gets off work each day. Neighbors and friends have brought food and helped with the children and Dave is optimistic about things. Andrea has had a lot of nausea with this pregnancy and continues to battle it so it has been a pretty rugged few months for her.

Next Wednesday, the 26th, the Larsen's of Okanogan will be saying good-bye to that chapter of their lives and moving to Burley. Their possessions are due to arrive in Burley the first week of August but they will be in UT for a family reunion, in Logan when Paul and Jenny bless Sophia, here for a few days, and then back to UT for a class reunion before moving into their new home. Mike starts work on the 14th. Hopefully they can get settled in and begin to feel like it is home. We still can't believe our good fortune to have so many of you living within convenient driving distance.

SaraKay returned Saturday morning from Girl's Camp tired, sunburned, and in need of a shower, but she had a wonderful experience and loved being a junior leader! She said that it was very satisfying to create a meaningful experience for the younger campers and felt like the whole experience was a positive one. She is going to be going on a two-day backpacking trip for the fourth and fifth level girls next week. She is a little apprehensive about carrying a pack and living in the wilderness for two days but she is excited and already starting to gather her things together. We had a lot of compliments on her attitude and efforts at camp.

Daddy and I just arrived home from Tremonton where we met Paul and Jenny and kids and had a short picnic. They are going to use one of our cars while they are back and forth. They flew in this morning and will be spending a couple days in Heber with Becky before going to the Cutler and Johnson reunions. Next week they will come here and be able to catch Paul's reunion, go with us to Logan to bless Sophia, and come back to here for a couple days before leaving for home. It's quite an effort with preschoolers but they said the flight out was pleasant and the kids did pretty well.

John and Laurel are in a time of transition also. Tessa Jane is doing well and John will be returning to China in a couple of weeks. Laurel is feeling stronger each day.

[Dad] We've made some good visits with our missionary assignment the last couple of weeks. We are inviting people to our ward pioneer celebration with sacrament meeting in the shelter at 10:00 and a community picnic following with the ward providing hoagies, a drink, and watermelons and the members bringing salads, chips, etc. We are excited about the event and hope to get some less active and other neighbors to join us.

Last Saturday, my boss wanted me to come to the board meeting at Little Lemhi and bugle for the flag ceremonies at the beginning and the end. Sue and I really enjoyed our drive through the fields East of Ririe, through Swan Valley, and over Palisades Dam and winding around to the camp. It seemed like the ideal location for the bugler was on the OA dock part way around on the South side. It was fun to do that service and add to the impact of the opening and closing flag ceremonies. Just after the opening, we watched as a bald eagle flew over the lake, made a couple turns overhead before flying off to the East. What a beautiful sight! Sue said she wished she had her camera to capture the image of the bugler on the dock as the flag was going up with a deep blue-sky backdrop.

We drove home along the river to Falls Creek campground and took our time to enjoy the beauty of Heavenly Father's creations. All in all, it was a delightfully relaxing afternoon and a joy to share it with each other.

On Tuesday we had an executive staff meeting in the Idaho Falls Scout Office. We pulled everyone in from camps for the purpose of getting the fall roundup and recruiting on everyone's viewscreen. My major effort as of late has been putting things together for the Tiger Ear effort--which is coming up too fast. One of the biggest jobs is pulling together 600 volunteers to work four hour shifts in the booth and to clean it each night to prepare for the next day. Each district is given shifts to fill and depending on their size and proximity to Blackfoot have responsibility for from 10 to 100 volunteers to recruit.

July 25, 2006

[Mom] Happy Pioneer Day! Yesterday our ward hosted a Pioneer Sunday outside under the shelter to keep ward members relatively cool during the services. When we arrived to set up at

8:30 it was so hot that I knew it was going to be miserable by 10:00 when the services began. Much to our delight a cloud cover moved in and the entire morning was pleasant. About the time we finished up with the picnic lunch, the sun came out and we were back into the 90's. We were so grateful for the way the entire morning turned out. We had several less actives who attended as a result of our efforts to deliver invitations the previous two weeks. It is always sweet to see the response we get when we hold activities. Hopefully these interactions will lead to eventual activity in Church.

SaraKay had a fun week. On Friday a group of friends had a super date including going to a cave on the lavas, a picnic, a movie and dinner. The bunch got lost trying to find the cave and instead of it taking an hour to get there, it took two. By the time she got home from the extravaganza 10 hours later, she was pooped.

On Saturday a different bunch went to "Crazy for You" at the Hale Theatre in SLC. The play is the one they will be performing in January and so they were anxious to see it performed. It made for another long day. By Sunday she had had enough of dating to last her a long time.

She and I have been trying to get in some good hours at work. She has about four weeks until school starts and her goal is to make enough to pay for things so that she can bank her harvest funds for college. It has been a challenge with all the activities going on. This Thursday and Friday she is going on the stake's annual 4th and 5th year girls' backpack trip at Palisades. Next week the drama teacher is starting to teach the kids tap dancing so that they can do it in the play in January. It's an ambitious project but should be fun...and free!

We've been enjoying our garden and sharing it with some of our contacts. We had our first tomatoes today and have been enjoying the new potatoes. We have also eaten zucchini almost every night for the past week as well as our new onions. From the looks of things, I think our corn will be pretty pathetic, but at least the other veggies have thrived. It's satisfying to eat from our garden and help defray costs.

We are excited to have Steve and Bonnie coming tomorrow, Mike and Marci on Thursday, and Paul and Jenny on Friday. Seems like we have had some time with all the kids this summer except John and Laurel and we will be going to Ohio the end of August to spend some time with them and attend Tessa's blessing and Emma's baptism.

[Dad] Yesterday I was wishing we lived in Utah so we could have the 24th as a holiday. Sue mentioned our activities on Pioneer Sunday. We ended up with over 170 people for our meeting and picnic. It was a great success. I wore my pioneer shirt from the trek and there were a few others that dressed up. Lennie Pincock and Nolan Furniss rode their horses and after the picnic Nolan was giving the little kids rides. We ate every roll and had very little left over of the salads and sandwich meat and desserts. It was a great success. The Hanni's contributed their ice cream winnings from the Dreyer's "Best Neighborhood" contest which added some pizzazz for dessert. Reed and Melanie were also the speakers in our Sacrament Meeting and did a great job with the stories of pioneers that they shared and Reed's testimony at the end was particularly moving. It is incredible to think of the growth they have experienced since moving in next door--the ward has certainly been good for them!!!

August 8, 2006

[Mom] Although it's still plenty hot weather-wise, summer is winding down and the count-down to school has begun. I took SaraKay shopping on Saturday and we had a great time (spending her money). We're hoping to get in a few more days of work but for now we are grateful for the time to start getting things in order for school. Daddy and I will fly to Ohio the day after school starts so it's even more important that we be organized and ready.

We had a fun weekend. Mark and Rita let us know that they would be in Rexburg working on their rental house for the week and so we hosted a cookout for Friday night with the Larsen's. Although Rick and Terry couldn't come, we had Mark, Rita, Jessica, and Gary and Linda. The weather had been so blustery for the afternoon that I set the table in the dining room. It was a nice surprise that by the time everyone arrived the wind had died down and we enjoyed our backyard again. It was so relaxed and fun to be together and Daddy did a great job at the grill.

Saturday night Mike and Marci arrived and attended our meetings with us on Sunday. It's always nice to have our kids able to see some of the old ward members and renew those acquaintances. Mike gave Dave Hansen a big hug and he and his wife, Barbara, came over later in

the day to visit. Mike commented later about how certain people bond with you as you are going through those teen years and Dave is one that has always been a favorite of Mike's.

We spent a quiet Sabbath and had a chance to enjoy Amber. She is certainly a very happy, expressive baby!

Mike spent part of today going through the closet and storage room and getting things ready to take to Burley. When Marci asked if I would like Mike to get his "stuff" ready to move, I answered with a resounding "Yes!" It doesn't seem possible that we are actually getting to the point that the storage room is emptying out and most of what's left is ours.

On Thursday Mike and fam will leave for Burley. Although their home isn't completely finished, the mortgage company said that they could get moved in and the movers called and are ready to unload. We are going on Saturday with a load of boxes and to see their new home. It's an exciting time for them. One added plus is that one of Mike's best friends from dental school, is considering taking a position in Twin Falls which is about 20 minutes away. That would be very sweet for both couples!

[Dad] For FHE we went to Jensen's Grove for the 2nd week in a row. Mike and I rode 10 miles on the bike path and the girl's walked and visited. With the almost 22 miles that morning, it meant 32 miles for the day for me. Later we watched "Batman" and were thoroughly enthralled.

Becky just sent a proposed itinerary for my visit to Korea the end of September. As I deposit the check from Shaunnie from our China fund I am filled with renewed gratitude for each of you that have generously contributed to that fund. Thank you, thank you, thank you!!!!

August 13, 2006

[Mom] We've enjoyed a restful and quiet Sunday. SaraKay mentioned during dinner that it's been a long time since there were only three of us at Sunday dinner. I guess the summer is winding down and school is on the horizon. I always look forward to the shorter days and the routine that school brings with it although my life isn't as difficult now as it was for many years when summer brought the prospect of feeding 12 of us three times a day.

On Saturday we drove to Burley and lent a hand for a few hours with the moving-in process. Daddy is so valuable as a "handyman." He helped Mike get the dryer hooked up and also helped install the mailbox out front. SaraKay and I helped unpack the kitchen boxes. The movers really had things wrapped up! It was a major undertaking to remove all the paper from around glasses and other kitchenware. Although we didn't get everything put away before we left for home, I think we helped enough that they could manage. Moving is always such a hassle and a few extra hands make a lot of difference.

Their home is lovely. It is in a new subdivision and close to an elementary school and other new construction. They found out that their builder is the Elder's Quorum president in their ward so they already knew someone before they attended their meetings on Sunday.

Sunday night SaraKay asked about moving her bedroom downstairs and using the bathroom down there so she has her own shower. At first, I fought the idea since I have loved having the basement saved for company, but the more we talked the more I could understand her desire for a larger bedroom, especially when she has friends over. Monday we made the switch and now it is like dominos, each action leading to another one. Today I got her old room ready to paint and once that is done, we hope to clear out the computer room and recarpet and paint it. We have needed to do it for a long time but we just couldn't face all the work.

Tonight I picked corn, tomatoes, and dug spuds and delivered them to our investigators. It is such a nice gift to give and always appreciated. We have so enjoyed our produce this year and continue to marvel at how much we harvest from such a small spot. Isn't the earth amazing!

[Dad] It is hard to believe that summer is drawing to a close. We have had some wonderful times with family. Work has been

a little lighter lately, but the pace is picking up as we get into fall. I really enjoy the work I do and am grateful to have an honorable means of providing for the needs of my family and preparing for retirement in three years, four months, and fourteen days (but who is counting?)

August 21, 2006

[Mom] We have been having sporadic problems with our internet connection and haven't been

able to figure out why we lose it sometimes. Last night was one of those times when we just couldn't get it to go through so if anyone was on "Chat," we apologize for not being there.

The highlight of the week for Daddy and I was going to the temple Saturday morning and seeing Donna Jess and Gordon Parsons (brother and sister) sealed to their parents. Donna and Gordon are two of the members we have activated this past year and it has been so sweet to see them come into activity and claim their temple blessings. A few weeks ago Donna did the temple work for Gordon's deceased wife, Marjorie, and that was a wonderful day for them as well. It gave me renewed commitment to continue working with the investigators and less active members and not lose sight of their value.

One definite reward of being missionaries has been that we have learned to love the people we visit. Right now we have about 17 families that we visit regularly and another 10 who we visit occasionally. The other couples each have several in their zones and our combined effort touches about 45-50 families of the 90 who are less active or not of our faith. It keeps us hopping to befriend that many families but it has been very satisfying and although we haven't had a baptism, we have felt like the families are warming up to us.

One Relief Society mini-class that we are hoping to get started is an English class for Latino women who want to develop language skills. I have visited with about 6-8 women in our boundaries that I think I could get to attend such a class if it was offered.

Our project to redo our two small upstairs bedrooms has come to a halt until after our trip to Cincinnati this weekend. On Saturday Daddy redid the shelving in the computer room closet and I got it painted. It looks so nice and makes us anxious to finish off the rooms. SaraKay is doing fine by herself downstairs although she says it is a little lonely at times. She is anxious for school to start and had her first piano lesson this morning. I can feel my own nerves on edge with all the stress of all the immediate demands on her with auditions and class schedule. She dropped cross country to give her music more time but even that concession hasn't freed her up enough to get done what she is trying to do.

We are excited for our trip to Ohio. We leave Thursday morning and return Sunday night. SaraKay will spend the nights with a friend but be here at home for meals, homework, practicing, etc. John arrived in Detroit late Saturday night and drove to Cincinnati after picking up their new car, arriving about two a.m. I'm sure that John and Laurel both feel a huge relief at having completed the last six months and moving ahead with life in Michigan. I'm sure they will look back at this past year as one of the most difficult of their lives. I know they recognize the Lord's many blessings.

I am going to quit and go pick tomatoes. We have a bunch ready and I've got a great recipe for fresh Mex salsa that I'm going to try. Our garden has been such a blessing this year and we just keep picking and digging and enjoying everything. Dave said they have had blackberries, raspberries, grapes and peaches and I told him that we had all the veggies. Wish we could live closer and share a little more

[Dad] Yesterday was "Back to School" for the Snake River Elementary schools and we set up to recruit with yard signs saying, "Join Cub Scouts," a table with brochures, and a flyer advertising a District Cub Scout activity this Saturday at Airport Park, and so on. With three of us there at each school in full uniform we attracted some attention and were able to get several interested boys. We also had discussions with people involved in an after-school program about providing Cub Scouting one day a week at the same time as the Girl Scouts provide a program for the girls. This looks like a very promising way to help us meet our membership goals for this year.

With my scripture reading, I finished the Old Testament the last day of July and am working my way through the New Testament and am now in Luke. For our family scripture time each night we read from the Book of Mormon and have been pretty faithful with that for about a week now. I have been reading a great book, "The Anatomy of Peace," from the Arbinger Institute and would highly recommend it to all. It is a sequel to "Leadership and Self-Deception" and builds on the concepts we had taught our professional staff a year ago.

August 28, 2006

[Mom] We returned from Cincinnati a few hours ago, grateful for the wonderful time we spent with John and Laurel and their family and participated in Emma's baptism and Tessa's blessing. Our flight Thursday morning was uneventful except for being delayed because V.P.

Cheney was at the Cincinnati airport and we couldn't land until he was gone and security back to normal. Several on our flight missed their connecting flights, but fortunately we didn't have to worry about that.

John, Emma and James met us at the airport and we went to the McAllisters for a delicious meal of "Cincinnati Chili," the dish the city is famous for. It is similar to regular chili but the main spice is cinnamon and it is served on pasta or hot dogs. We enjoyed being introduced to this traditional dish we've heard so much about.

When we pulled up to the McAllister home, Laurel was standing on the front driveway with a pink bundle in her arms. Tessa has a fussy time in the evening and one thing that seems to calm her is taking a walk and Laurel was doing that when we arrived. Eliza soon joined us and there were lots of hugs all around. Our first order of business was to get acquainted with our 30th grandchild. Tessa was patient to put up with being handed around and played with. She is almost two months old now and continues to have good reports from the doctors. Last week she had a kidney scan and it came back showing that her kidneys are good. Each report is encouraging and gives them a lot of hope that she will be able to have a full and joyful life.

On Friday morning Laurel's Dad took us on a tour of the city. He is the perfect guide since he has lived in that area for nearly thirty years and knows its history well. We appreciated learning about the settling and history of that part of the Ohio Valley. The area is as green and lush as is the rest of the Midwest and the Ohio River is wide and big and beautiful!

That afternoon John and Laurel and kids joined us at the hotel for a swim. We were so lucky since no other guests used the pool all afternoon and we had a great time relaxing. For dinner we went back to McAllisters and had a feast of ham and garden vegetables! Marilyn has a large garden which includes herbs which she used as she prepared yellow squash, zucchini, tomatoes, fresh string beans, and a potato dish. We were so impressed by Laurel's family and their lovely home. Her parents really went to a lot of work to accommodate us and make us feel so welcome.

I thought I would like to mention a few things about their home. Ken is a grandson of Joseph F. Smith and Marilyn comes from a family that was converted about the time Marilyn was 14 years old. Marilyn has several antiques that she has received from both sides of the family including an organ and China closet. In her dining room she has a large three-paneled screen that has family pictures in the panels; being in that room gives you a sense of family and roots. In the front entryway is a glass case that has memorabilia of things belonging to Joseph F. Smith and pictures of several ancestors adorn the walls. It reflects Marilyn and Ken's interest in family history work and sets a nice tone in the home.

Saturday we attended Emma's baptism at their stake center. Laurel had prepared birthday cake and frappe' for dessert and there was about 65 people in attendance. It was a sweet program which included a duet by John and Emma singing, "I Like To Look For Rainbows" and the McAllister cousins singing "I'm Trying To Be Like Jesus." Marilyn and I gave the talks and John baptized and confirmed Emma and then blessed Tessa.

I was sitting on the second row near the front and by some coincidence, even though the circle of priesthood holders was large and close together, for a few seconds I had a view of John with his head bowed and his Dad at his side with his head bowed. Their profiles were side by side and the impression I had was of the strength of the grandfather supporting his son and the son supporting the infant tenderly and protectively in his arms. How grateful I am for the gospel, the perspective it gives us as we make this mortal journey and of the power and comfort it provides in times of trial.

Later I asked John about how he and Laurel were bearing up with the pressures of the last six months. He said that they were doing fine but that he had a feeling that once they got moved into their home and life got back to normal that he was going to sit down and have a good cry. There have just been so many difficult, heart wrenching, and traumatic times the last six months and they have drawn from reservoirs of strength they didn't even know they had. Laurel said that people's concern and love for them through this trial has been so overwhelming that they can't hardly fathom it. They know the Lord has sustained them and that friends and family have helped ease their way.

On Saturday evening we attended the night session of stake conference with them since Marilyn was speaking. The stake presidency asked her to speak on the power of prayer and she gave an inspiring and instructional talk on her experiences with prayer. Her last account was of

the situation with John and Laurel and their miracle baby. Needless to say, it was a beautiful talk and after the meeting many members of the stake came up to make our acquaintance and visit with us about Tessa. We feel so grateful for all that Laurel's family have done to help their family through this. I don't know if Laurel could have done it without her mother at her side.

One of the nice surprises of the evening was when a woman approached us and we realized that it was Laurie Cutler's sister! She had that beautiful Johnson look and we thoroughly enjoyed making their acquaintance. They live there in Cincinnati and had hosted Paul and Jenny last Thanksgiving holiday. After talking it through it all came together for me because we got pictures of Paul and Jenny's stay with them but I never made the connection that they might live in the same stake as the McAllisters!

The one regret we had was that we didn't make connections with David Gentry who is a missionary in Cincinnati. The McAllister's called all the ward missionaries they knew and we tried the mission offices but just couldn't find anyone at home. We were sorry not to be able to make the connection for Jeanie and Scott.

[Dad] Today was the first staff meeting since camps have closed and it was a big one as we worked our way through everything that is going to happen in the coming months. Right at the moment we are two people shy of having a full staff, but it looks like we have an experienced man coming aboard within the next couple of weeks. He is from South America and should be a great help with us in working with the growing Latino population in the council.

Yesterday didn't seem like a Sunday with flying a big share of the day and then driving home from SLC. SaraKay was glad to welcome us and it took several hours of talking through her first few days of school, Chamber's retreat, and football game to catch up with her activities while we were gone.

Sue gave a pretty good accounting of our activities in Cincinnati. It was a treat to share this special time with John and Laurel and to get reacquainted with their kids and get to hold and bond with Tessa. If you haven't done so yet, check out their blog for some great pictures of our weekend with them. They were experiencing a little drought in Cincinnati--it hadn't rained there for three weeks. Many of the lawns and some of the vegetation showed some stress. It is hard to believe that they wouldn't break out the hoses and keep their lawns watered like we do in the West but they don't.

I have been especially touched with this quote from President Monson regarding President Hinckley: "Amidst the turbulence of our times, we reach out for one who will guide us to safety; that one is President Gordon B. Hinckley. He is our prophet, seer, and revelator. He is an island of calm in a sea of storm. He is as a lighthouse to the mariner who is lost. He is your friend and my friend... He's a man of optimism... He's a man of gifted intellect. He's a man of compassion, a man of capacity, a friend to one and all, and a leader who inspires spirituality... He is truly a prophet for our time."

September 3, 2006

[Mom] We just returned this afternoon from Boise where we attended Joseph's baptism and confirmation. SaraKay and I had planned to go without Daddy since the fair started yesterday, but on Friday his boss suggested that he assign everything out and just take off. Daddy didn't know if he could do that but Don Scott, who is his volunteer counter-part and a dear friend, offered to do all the hauling and stocking for Sunday so Daddy decided to go.

It was a bit tricky to pull SaraKay away, too, since the Chambers were performing on a float in the parade Saturday morning. In order to beat the after-parade crowds, I met her at the end of the parade route and whisked her away. By two that afternoon we were packed and ready to go.

When we arrived at the stake center, Daddy hid until we had greeted David and Joseph who arrived with Mom Laurel a few minutes before Andrea and the kids. When Daddy jumped out it was a surprise for everyone. I was so grateful that he shared in the occasion since so many times he is absent because of work demands.

Joseph looked like a little missionary all spiffed up in his white shirt and tie. He had been a little apprehensive about getting baptized but it all went off without a hitch. Tim joined us and following baptism we all enjoyed a delicious meal prepared by Andrea and her mother.

Sunday morning we attended sacrament meeting with them. It was a special treat to hear David, Laurel, and Anna all bear their testimonies. As I sat listening to them, I thought about something that the bishop said during his remarks at Emma's baptism. He said that at each baptism he attends, he tries to let the Spirit prompt him

with a scripture that fits the occasion. He said that the scripture that kept coming into his mind was, "Men are that they might have joy." Then he commented that Emma had been baptized and Tessa was going to be blessed; the family was surrounded by loved ones and friends. He said, "It just doesn't get any better than this!" That sentiment was what I was thinking about as we sat together in sacrament meeting with Dave, Andrea and their family and reflected on the fruits of living the gospel.

Another highlight of our week was when SaraKay got the female lead in the school musical. She and Audrey Griffith will share the part, each performing it three times. The director double cast the female lead and one other part since there were so many students trying out. The results were supposed to be posted Thursday night on the school's web site so SaraKay was up late and at various intervals throughout the night checking for the results. By morning nothing was posted and she thought maybe the selections were delayed. A few minutes after she got to school, she was told that the results were on the choir room door. She was so surprised to see that she had gotten the part. The play isn't until March, so she can have time to start practicing the dance routines for her character. She has never had any dance training and this part is going to be quite a challenge since it involves a lot of tap dancing.

Today Daddy is at the fair and SaraKay and I are home taking care of business. We are going to do some yard work and then she has a study group meeting at 3:00 for AP Biology. Fair week is always so stressful for Daddy and so much hard physical work with all the loading and unloading of supplies each day. One of the hardest things is all the hours he spends standing, supervising and troubleshooting. I guess they had a great day on Saturday and the crowds are big again today. It's a great money-maker for the scouts and continues to be one of the most enduring traditions of the fair.

September 10, 2006

[Mom] The big news of the week is that Tiger Ear is over for another year. Daddy doesn't have a final tally yet, but this may have been the best year on record. The weather was so nice and the crowds consistent throughout the week. The biggest problem was that many of the people who signed up for shifts didn't show and then Daddy would have to get on the phone to recruit people to fill those spots. It is so frustrating when that happens but fortunately there are many wonderful "minute men" (and women) who came to his aid.

I get so stressed with all of Daddy's responsibilities that it wears on me as well. I worry about all the lifting and loading he does and about the hours that he is on his feet without a break. Most years I have no desire to go to the fair and usually neither Daddy or I go.

On Wednesday Mrs. Casperson called and said that the Chambers needed six additional parents to help with ushering for the night show and I agreed to go with SaraKay and help with that. I was dreading it but all in all it turned out to be a fun experience as I got to see lots of people I knew and then between ushering and cleaning up I got to visit the antique, handicraft, and photography displays. I always enjoy seeing the entries and it was fun to recognize some of the participants.

Friday Dan Deacon (scout district exec who Dad supervises) and his family of seven from Jackson Hole came. We originally offered a bed to Dan who had shifts earlier in the week and didn't want to drive back to Jackson that night. He said that his family wanted to come and help in the booth as well as see the fair but the distances were prohibitive. I offered them the basement and they took us up on it, arriving Friday evening and leaving about noon on Saturday. They are a sweet young family!

As I mentioned last week, we have been in the process of redoing the computer room and small bedroom upstairs. We painted SaraKay's old bedroom, shampooed the carpets, washed the window and blinds and are ready to get things moved back in. I am going to use it as a guest room since having SK downstairs has worked well and she is content. The computer room has been in sad need of upgrading for a long time but the task was so daunting that we could hardly face it. Several weeks ago, we chose a piece of carpet that we liked but the salesman at Blacker's said that they were so busy they probably wouldn't get to us for several weeks. I started the process of cleaning out shelves and Daddy put all new shelving in for me so that we almost doubled the space we had before.

On Monday I called Blacker's to remind them that we were anxious to get the carpet laid before Daddy left for Korea and they said they could come the next morning. Well, you can imagine the

panic as we bought paint, dismantled the computer desk and my desk and prepared to vacate the room. We put everything we could into the other bedroom and I painted non-stop until we had everything ready by Tuesday morning.

We love our new room and we are almost totally moved back in except for a few pictures that need to be hung on the walls. To top it off, Daddy bought me a small Lazy-boy recliner that just fits in the corner and is so comfortable! I can't quit smiling about my new room!

I better go. I have a formal to remodel for SaraKay for Homecoming this weekend. We bought it on sale several months ago but it has some issues and I need to solve them. Last year SaraKay wasn't old enough to attend any school dances and she was moaning about being 15. Now she is old enough but the boy who asked her is far from her dream date and the other day she was moaning that she wished she was 15 again! Just can't win for losing.

[Dad] To report on the Tiger Ear Booth—it was the second-best year we have ever had. We set records on Friday and Saturday nights and ended up making about 33,000 scones in eight days. I would haul in all the ingredients starting at 7:00 each morning and then get things organized and set up for starting a new shift. Personally I handled 6 1/4 tons of flour, 1 ton of sugar, 1/2 ton of powdered milk, 2 tons of canola oil, 2 80# bags of salt, nearly a ton of honey butter, and many boxes of yeast, paper towels, napkins, quik wrap, Scouting for Food bags, and so on. I feel so blessed to be able to do all this without the usual ibuprofen fix to get through the day. My exercise program has paid off and the Lord has really blessed me. The only time I needed any medication was the night we moved things out of the office and painted.

We've got a big week ahead. It is Homecoming and we take tickets at the dance on Friday, teach an Eagle Scout Certification class on Thursday, Roundtable on Wednesday night, Back-to-School nights at most of the Blackfoot elementary schools to recruit new boys, and so on. No rest for the wicked, I guess.

It doesn't seem possible that next week is when I fly to Korea. I am excited about the itinerary Becky has arranged and appreciate so much what each of you have contributed to make it possible for me to make this trip.

Let me just close with this quote about work: "There is nothing else that can give the same kind of satisfaction as a good day's work. Time spent in productive effort builds confidence, responsibility and a real sense of control over your own destiny. Yes, work can sometimes be tedious, frustrating and even painful. Yet by overcoming the many and varied challenges offered by your work, you are creating something of real value. Even when your work does not yield immediate results, your efforts will never go unrewarded. For even if there is nothing else that comes of it, the work itself is ample reward. Work brings with it the opportunity to make a difference, and the need to be needed is something that everyone knows. With your work, whatever it may be, you have a real and lasting impact on life. Work is more than a job, more than a task, more than a set of efforts. Work is a powerful and fulfilling way that you can express who you are. Whatever form it may take, work reminds you that you're alive, creative, innovative, effective and uniquely important. Put some work into this day, and you'll add your own real substance to life."
--Ralph Marston

September 18, 2006

[Mom] We've had a busy week. Last Sunday I got a phone call from the student body president at the high school saying that SaraKay was one of three nominated for Junior class Homecoming royalty and that the officers were going to arrive Monday morning at 5:30 to awaken SaraKay and surprise her with the news and take her to a breakfast to start off the festivities. That was the beginning of a very intense week for her including Coronation assembly, Pep Assembly, Football game, decorating for the dance on Saturday, play practice, and her date that occupied most of Saturday afternoon and evening.

Because Chambers were in charge of the dance, Daddy and I attended as chaperones as well as being in charge of refreshments. By the time we got home after midnight Saturday night, we felt like we had been through the wringer. So did SaraKay. Fortunately, we had purchased a formal for her when we were doing school shopping because all the prom dresses were on sale and she figured she might need one for this year. With everything else going on we were grateful we didn't have to make a frantic shopping trip for a dress, too.

We forwarded the pics we took throughout the week. The other two girls running were paired up

with their boyfriends who were also candidates, so SaraKay got paired up with Zac Hansen, her great friend and fellow Chamber singer. The pics of the football boy are of Michael Tominaga who, like SaraKay, took first runner-up to the prince and princess. The pics of SaraKay alone were taken because she hasn't had a school picture turn out for so long that we felt like we'd try to get one she liked and then order some so she has a good one on hand. The pics haven't been sorted or had any deleted because we haven't had time to fuss with them. In fact, SaraKay didn't want us to send them out but several of the kids found out she was running and they wanted to see some pictures so Daddy posted them all.

It was a marathon for all of us. I attended the Coronation assembly and hauled SaraKay's stuff back and forth while she did her best to not miss too much school while she was excused for all the preparations. When she put her dress on Saturday night she said, "I am so sick of having to look good! It will be nice to relax and just wear my t-shirt and sweats again." Anyway, it was a special week and she felt honored to have been selected by her peers for it.

Sunday morning at six we left for Layton for Teresa's farewell. We arrived about 8:30 ahead of most of the rest of the family but soon Gary, Linda, Emily and Ashley arrived as well as Jeanie who had made the long trip alone. En route she had stayed with Jeremy and his new bride in Provo and then had some time there with Karen. Teresa did a wonderful job both on her talk and the song she sang with a close friend. She is a lovely and prepared young woman and seems very content with her decision to serve a mission. Following the meeting, we went to the Vanfleet home for a wonderful meal and got to meet many in Jim's family. We missed Rick and Terry and their kids as well as Staff and Mark and their families.

Following the gathering we left for home and arrived here a little after three. Daddy was such a trooper with all the driving. I spelled him off for a short while both coming and going but he did most of it while SaraKay and I slept. When we arrived home, he laid down and slept for over an hour he was so tired. He was feeling like he had a cold coming on and didn't want to be sick for his visit to Korea. He is excited to go and finishing up all his preparations so he feels like he can pull away without too much inconvenience.

I wanted to thank Marci for all her efforts to gather new addresses as well as phone numbers and e-mails for the directory that she put together for the family. Mike said that their old directory was so scribbled up with all the changes that Marci decided it was time to produce a new one.

Let me remind everyone about Women's Conference this Saturday and Priesthood Session next. Maybe some of you can plan to attend together. SaraKay is starting her harvest job on Monday and looking forward to that. Just got off the phone with Laurel. She said the Ford layoffs have put a pretty dismal feeling into the ward and community. They don't know yet if John will be affected.

Daddy called this morning saying that his flight went well and he arrived at Becky's safe and sound. I told him to be sure to give thanks in his prayers for safety...his and Tim's. Then I told him that I had called Tim last night to see how he was doing and he told me that he had been hit by a car while crossing the street. He had been in the crosswalk area and all at once he heard a car rev up its engine and realized that the car was coming right at him and the driver just didn't even see him.

He knew he didn't have any time to get out of the way so as the car grill touched his leg, he leaped and ended up on the hood and into the windshield, sliding because of the momentum and the rain. The car came to a halt and he slid off the side and onto the street. It all happened so fast that he was in shock. The driver rolled down his window and yelled something like, "Are you alright?" and when Tim said that he was, the driver took off.

A woman standing by Tim saw it all and was furious at the driver but Tim didn't have enough presence of mind to get either of their names or licenses. Of course, I scolded him for not at least getting the police on site, but it's over and he can't go back now. Fortunately, he doesn't seem to have any injuries from the encounter. It could have been so bad! We continue to be grateful for the Lord's watch care over us.

September 24, 2006

[Mom] Boy, it's quiet around here without Daddy! As you know, he is the one who makes all the noise! Well, maybe not all the noise, but having two people in this house instead of three is definitely a change. He flew out Thursday morning, arrived Becky's time about 6 p.m. on Friday and discovered to his horror that his luggage didn't make the transpacific flight and

was still sitting in Seattle! So... since no one, I repeat, no one in Korea is big enough to loan him some Sunday clothes, he arrived at Becky's branch on Sunday in Levi's and a white shirt and tie that a friend of Becky's picked up on the army base. His clothes finally arrived Sunday evening about 10 p.m. so he will have what he needs for the rest of his stay. He did say that Becky has about walked his legs off. That coming from a man who cycles an average of 15 miles a day! I'm sure he is quite a spectacle among the Korean people!

We sure do miss him! Yesterday the weather finally cleared off and SaraKay and I spent part of the day mowing and trimming the yard and clearing off part of the garden. I decided that it was time to bring in the winter squash since we have had several killing frosts. I only planted three plants since usually I have so many that I can't possibly use them all. Well, that didn't work because when I was through gathering them I had about 50 squash! Today at church I found homes for several and I hope to deliver some to our less active and investigator families. I never cease to be amazed at the "good earth."

Tomorrow spud harvest officially starts although some of the farmers who grow the early Norkoda variety of potato have been going strong for over six weeks now. Richard Tominaga said that SaraKay could start tomorrow. Hopefully the weather will permit them a full two weeks. She is excited and we have a cupboard full of special harvest treats that she will be taking for her lunches. We need to get into harvest before we eat all the treats!

One of the highlights of our week was attending the Pocatello ISU Performing Arts Center for a performance of the Orchestra at Temple Square. When we heard the announcement read in sacrament meeting two weeks ago, we were surprised to learn that one of the numbers they would be performing was a concerto by Rachmaninoff. It is the same one that SaraKay will be performing with the community orchestra in December. I knew that it would be so helpful for SaraKay to attend and hear it performed and yet the price of the tickets was so high that I wasn't sure we could justify the expense.

A few days after the announcement, Colleen Winder called and said that she had three tickets that she, her husband, and Angela purchased and then because she is the stake music chairman, her stake president gave her two complimentary tickets. She wondered if we would like to attend and said that she would sell us her tickets, two for the price of one! What a blessing! So, on Friday night we dressed up in our best duds and attended a wonderful concert. The music was so absolutely fantastic that I felt like I was in heaven. When the concert was over, I wanted to leap to my feet and yell, "Bravo!" Later SaraKay commented that during the concert she looked over at me and she knew that I was feeling the same emotions that were welling up inside of her. It was purely divine!

Although SaraKay is only performing the first movement of the concerto, the Russian guest pianist performed all three. It was fun to hear the part that SaraKay has been practicing every day for the last four months and knows so well. After the concert Linnea came up and compared notes with SaraKay on her impressions of the performance and some of the interpretations he gave the music.

I thought as I watched Linnea with SaraKay that I am the recipient of so much help in this community. There have been so many adults over the years that have played an important role in mentoring my family and to them I owe a huge debt of gratitude. They are all a part of this wonderful "village" that has helped each of us develop and grow into more than we would otherwise have been.

I want to also comment on some of the program notes about the composers. Each of the composers highlighted in the program were from Russia and their history reflects the tumultuous history of that country. In fact, one of the quotes mentioned was, "a good Russian is only happy when he is sad." This typifies a people whose character has been forged by struggles and suffering." The composers were not without their struggles. One, Shostakovich, lived under Stalin, and was terribly persecuted for his works and even feared for his life. After the fall of Stalin, Shostakovich again began composing music and it is full of joy and effervescence.

Rachmaninoff fled Russia before the iron curtain came down and he lived in California and tried to compose but he was terribly homesick and realized that he probably would never be able to return to his beloved land. He wrote one composition and was given a bad review by a fellow composer and he went into a depression and had a nervous breakdown. He didn't compose for many years and was helped out of

his depression by a dear friend who performed hypnosis on him. Anyway, I kept thinking that greatness is many times born of struggles and determination to carry on despite external forces at play in our lives.

When the concert was over, rather than push to get into the horrific traffic exiting the parking lot, we just sat and visited about the concert. Finally, when I could see that the traffic was thinning, I worked us into the stream of vehicles and we inched our way toward the exit. We watched as the big tour bus carrying the orchestra also joined the traffic and Angela and SaraKay made comments like, "I wonder if they are going back to Utah tonight?" and "Do you think the conductor and pianist travel on the bus?"

Well, we inched along and pretty soon we got to a juncture and I noticed a lone car sitting, waiting for someone to let them into the line of traffic. I decided to stop and wave them in. They responded with a grateful wave and were immediately in front of us. With our headlights on their car, it became obvious who was in the back seat; the conductor and the famous pianist! We were so happy that we had let them in and that our questions had been answered.

I teased SaraKay and Angela that at the next stop light they should jump out, run up to the car and tap on the window and ask for an autograph, but of course, they didn't. But we did have our questions answered as we followed them and saw them take the exit for Twin Falls and realized that those two members of the group traveled by rental car with someone chauffeuring them. It made for a nice ending to a magical night!

This week I am going to wash windows and winterize the yard a little more. This morning SaraKay said that we have made it through four days now without Daddy. She hates it when he is gone and counts down the days. I do too.

October 2, 2006

[Mom] I am going to have Daddy write the bulk of this letter and share with you some of his experiences the last ten days in Korea. He really enjoyed his time with Chet and Becky and their family. He took today off to get some sleep since jet lag is still plaguing him but I think by tomorrow he will start feeling normal again. I had worried about the long flights and the possibility of his phlebitis flaring up but he got along great coming and going. We picked him up Saturday night at 10 p.m. at the Idaho Falls airport and felt grateful to get him home.

SaraKay and I had a relatively quiet week while Dad was gone. She went out to work in the harvest every day and I spent several days doing some phoning for Dad regarding the Cub Scout rosters.

When Dad leaves it's like our life moves at a slower pace and so it was a perfect week for me to get the information gathered for him. The survey is about 75% completed. I sat down with him this morning and went over the information. He said that it was nice to know that some of his job responsibilities were still being addressed even though he was gone.

One of the highlights of the week was our weekend with Mike and Marci and Amber. They arrived Friday night and left Sunday after conference was over. It was so fun to get to play with Amber during conference. She is certainly a little charmer and good-natured baby. I had pretty much done my cooking and cleaning earlier in the week and so it was very enjoyable to share the conference weekend with them.

Daddy and SaraKay joined us on Sunday and we again enjoyed the chance to hear conference and feast on the beautiful talks. I am so grateful for my membership in the Church and continue to marvel at the amazing individuals who lead us. I know that many of you were able to listen and felt the same.

I just talked with Jenny and she said that Dow Chemical is flying Paul to Midland, Michigan for an interview. He is excited that he has some companies interested and that this long doctorate journey is coming to a close. Another company from Naperville has also shown some interest and they have heard from several sources that it is a lovely area.

Last night we had almost everyone present for Chat. Next Sunday is Sam's Eagle Court of Honor so we decided to do it yesterday. It was especially nice to have John join us since he has not been on for two years since moving to China. Laurel was faithful but our Sunday night was John's Monday morning and he was always at work and couldn't join us. Everyone seems to be doing well and had enjoyed conference. Even John and Laurel received the broadcast by satellite dish and watched all the sessions. They have missed that opportunity of gathering with the

saints while in Chongqing and are enjoying being back in the mainstream of the Church.

Last night SaraKay was bemoaning another week in the potatoes and she asked Daddy if there was any chance they would get rained out this week. He reassured her that there wasn't. Just to make sure he checked Weather Underground and it said that the weather would be overcast with a very slight chance of rain. Well, this afternoon it is pouring out there so I guess she got her wish. She'll probably walk in the back door with a big smile on her face any minute now.

She likes harvest but this year there are two Latino boys working on the belt with her and Karina who have a romantic attachment to them and they keep telling them (through an interpreter, of course) that they have pretty eyes and they want to "hang out" with them. Early in the week SaraKay told them that she has a boyfriend but later Mike Tominaga told them she didn't so now she is worried they are going to think she should like them. We've all had a good laugh over it but she isn't thinking it is so funny so she is anxious for harvest to be over. Oh, the joys of the spud harvest! Remember when each harvest Son Ignacio would confess his love for Shauntel? Those were the good old days. Right, Shaunnie?

[Dad] Thanks to the best tour guide in Korea for a wonderful and insightful time the last ten days. I was so impressed with the Korean people--they are beautiful people and have such resilience and patience and a strong work ethic to have built what they have in South Korea over the last sixty years. It was particularly rewarding to spend the time I did with Becky's family and to see how much they have grown and the quality of their life. Chet is a great father and provider! We will try to get my pictures posted today so you can get a flavor of what my experience was like.

On Saturday we went to an old fortress, visited the Korean International School (KIS) that Maddy and Tate attend--what a beautiful and impressive faculty, and went to a park in Bundang. Sunday we drove to church and met many of their friends in the branch and saw Chet in action teaching the Gospel Doctrine class. It was rewarding to feel of the love and respect which the members have for the Seely family and the strength they are to the branch.

Monday was spent with Becky at the Namdaemun market successfully shopping for Christmas presents to bring home for all the grandkids, sons, daughters, and in-laws. What a fascinating place. I was overwhelmed with the kaleidoscope of sights, sounds, and smells. It was great to be able to rise above it all and get a bird's eye view from the cable car to the Namsan tower.

Tuesday we left early to catch the USO sponsored tour of the DMZ (Demilitarized zone). It was neat to get that insight into history and the reality of the border between North & South Korea. We even descended into one of the tunnels that had been found which the North Koreans had blasted to penetrate and insert troops into South Korea. After returning to Seoul, we had a meal at a Thai restaurant--one of the epicurean highlights of my trip.

Wednesday was a shopping excursion to Walmart (which is soon exiting from Korea). A Korean Walmart is like no other Walmart you will experience. It was fascinating to see how easily Becky navigates via car, bus, subway, taxi, or walking to get where she wants to go. She really knows her way around Seoul, but it is sure time consuming and a horrific challenge traveling with her four kids in tow wherever she goes--it reminds of trying to herd chickens.

The tour of Changdeokgung Palace, the Bongeunsa Buddhist temple complex, a traditional Korean kalbi dinner, some more shopping, and visiting the Seoul Fine Arts Center and watching the water music--fountains choreographed and color coordinated to go with the music pretty much wrapped up the week. The Palace was amazing--from a bridge built before Columbus, to restored early autos, to a wonderful garden and beautiful buildings. At the Buddhist temple complex there was a real feeling of peace and reverence even though there were school children there for a field day.

All in all, my trip was extremely interesting and satisfying. Thanks to the use of Chet's bike my early morning routine was uninterrupted. It was amazing how many people were out walking, running, and biking at 5:00 in the morning. The city is such a clean and safe place that I have no fears for the Seely family and know the Lord will continue to watch over them. May peace be with you, this day and always.

October 9, 2006

[Mom] This morning dawned cloudy and gloomy for the 7th straight day. It has been such a discouraging time for the spud farmers who have been trying without success to have enough good

weather to get their crop out. Last Monday SaraKay worked for part of a day but by Tuesday the rain had forced all activity to come to a halt. Just when things seemed to be drying out a little, the rains would come again and postpone work. The crew tried on Friday to dig, but SaraKay was home by noon saying that the mud was just so bad. Even though we don't feel like we had much harvest, it is over for this year for SaraKay.

I become increasingly convinced that "spud harvest" will be phased out in the years ahead. Many of the farmers grow varieties that they start harvesting in August. Richard had already been digging spuds for six weeks when the harvest break started for the kids so, he has to have an adult crew for that long and the kid's part is only a little bit of the total effort.

Many of SaraKay's friends didn't even have jobs this year and the younger children never do. Maybe it has outlived its usefulness. Time will tell. I told Richard that I would be willing to help him finish up but I don't know if he will call. But it's raining outside again this morning so I guess I won't be going out today.

Daddy has been quite sick this past week with bronchitis. He went to the doctor on Thursday and got several meds that have made a huge difference to him. I was worried that he wouldn't be able to go to Logan for Sam's Eagle Court of Honor on Sunday, but by Saturday he was starting to feel human again.

We really enjoyed our time with the Bennion's yesterday. We attended our meetings first and then drove to Logan, arriving at about three. Stephani had fixed a stew with lots of vegetables from her garden. It was so delicious! After lunch we took a tour around their yard and even took a few minutes to pick some of her raspberries that are planted along the front sidewalk area. They were some of the biggest berries I had ever seen. Some of them were nearly as large as strawberries! We also toured the flower beds since SaraKay is going to be in charge of our flower beds next summer and she wanted to know some of the varieties that Steph had planted.

At our request, Josh sang a song for us that he will be performing with their ward choir next week. He still has a beautiful and clear high voice and said that he sings with the soprano section each week. He also played us some numbers on his cello. Sam has been involved with marching band and will be performing this week in Provo and on the 28th in Pocatello so we will be able to see them. It has been very involved for him and the band has been preparing for these competitions all summer as well as after school. Sam plays the saxophone in marching band and the oboe in orchestra, which will start up once the marching band season is over. We are excited to get to see the competition at ISU.

Katie has been filling out scholarship forms and getting things in place for attending college in fall of '07. It still astounds me that we can have a granddaughter old enough to be graduating next June! She was recently selected as a finalist for the National Merit Scholarship and is working part-time to get her finances in place. She is a very bright student and is being wooed by several colleges although she is leaning towards Utah State since she knows they will be willing to give her a great scholarship that would go a long way towards meeting her needs.

At about 5:30 Steve, Rachel, Nate and Ann Marie arrived and Shauntel and Randy with Archie and Camille were close behind. We all left for the church and gathered with Doug and Naomi and Linds' brother, Chris, for the event. Many ward friends attended and other scout leaders and boys who were also receiving merit badges for their work done at scout camp last summer.

Following the presentation of the merit badges they then had a program to present Sam with his Eagle. Linds gave Sam a flag that had been flown over the Capital and had an accompanying certificate from their state senator congratulating him on his accomplishment. Then a slide show was done highlighting Sam through the years. It was understandably poignant to see pictures from the last 15 years and realize how quickly our lives pass. The fellow who presented Sam with his Eagle badge questioned him on several things including his project and I couldn't help thinking how well Sam presented himself and responded to the questions although it was entirely extemporaneous. Since part way through the program Daddy ended up sitting in the Eagles Nest, Randy took over as camera man and got some good shots of the event. We hope to be able to post them although we aren't sure since we couldn't get our Korea ones to download on PhotoMax. We will see what we can do. It was really sweet to share the experience with Sam and be there to lend congratulations and support.

In closing I thought I would relate two missionary experiences we had last week. We have felt like we were on a plateau with our efforts these last few weeks and so Daddy suggested that we visit some new families on Tuesday when we went around. We had already decided to visit the Castaneda/Ibarra family since they had a new baby and the mother, Toni, is a member. The birth of the baby had given the ward a lot of opportunities to give service and this had softened Toni's heart, we felt.

When we visited them Toni and her husband, Carlos, who is not a member, both sat down and visited with us. We asked about blessing Rylin and Toni commented that she had felt like she wanted to have it done but she didn't know who to have do it. Daddy offered and so Sunday Carlos and Toni with three of their other children attended sacrament meeting and we were able to see that ordinance performed. When it was over, Daddy held Rylin up for the congregation to see and it was a very sweet and proud moment for this family. Later in testimony meeting several testimonies mentioned the Ibarra's and complimented them on their fine family. I think it was a good experience and hopefully we will see them make a beginning.

The second thing that happened was that Tuesday night we dropped in to see the Lake family. We had tried before but never caught anyone home and we saw lights on and decided to try again. A large pleasant fellow answered the door and soon two children, ages 7 and 9 poked their heads around the man to see who we were and what we wanted. When I said that we were members of the church, the little girl jumped up and down and clapped her hands excitedly. She said that they were so happy we found them and that they had been wanting to go to Church but didn't know how to. It was such a warm welcome that it brightened our spirits and gave us a real boost. They invited us in and Daddy talked to Zack about joining scouting and promised to bring him a Pinewood Derby Kit the next day. I told them that I would call them on Saturday night to make sure they would still like to attend church with us.

On Saturday night I called but just got an answering machine so I identified myself and asked them to call me back. Soon the phone rang. It was Larissa saying, "Is this the lady who drives the church bus? We want to go to church with you tomorrow. Can you pick us up?" I assured her that I could and would. I hoped they wouldn't be too disappointed when I showed up in a van instead of a bus!

Well, they attended and even brought along a cousin who was visiting and they were so dressed up and cute that it warmed my heart to see them. They had a great time and asked if they could return the next week. I assured them that they could! It's times like that that keep Daddy and I "truckin'" in this missionary calling.

[Dad] I will concur with Sue on what a sweet experience it was to be in Logan with so much family for Sam's Eagle Court of Honor. It is wonderful to have a third generation of Eagles coming along and I sure hope all my grandson's rise to that challenge. Sam was so mature and handled himself with so much poise and assurance--I was so proud of him. Can it be possible that I have a grandson that old and a granddaughter getting ready to go to college? I guess I had better accept the reality of the situation.

Last week was a busy and full one even with being sick. The work never lets up and we keep on with meetings and activities. Our council has a training called Akela's Trail for cub scout leaders that is a three-day practical training. I am the professional advisor to Akela's Trail next year and we had our first staff meeting on Saturday. Key Four meetings with the District leadership and District Committee Meeting were a big part of the week. I also felt good enough to go to orchestra on Wednesday and we are preparing for our Christmas concert. One of the numbers we will be doing is a Rachmaninoff piano concerto with SaraKay at the piano with the orchestra accompanying her. That is going to be such a thrill to be a part of that performance with her.

President Shipley, whom I served with in the stake presidency, and his wife are serving a full-time mission in England. We have been receiving some of their emails about their mission experiences and it has been priming us to follow in their footsteps. It is also interesting to have their insights into England and to see how little some things have changed in forty years. Better close and get to work.

October 17, 2006

[Mom] The wonderful news of the week is that Staff's Jimmy arrived home from Iraq safe and sound! We're proud of him and grateful for his service to our country. We hope his reentry into civilian life will be smooth.

Daddy extended his lunch hour today so that I could get an uninterrupted nap. I started getting sick Saturday night while we were at SaraKay's choral performance and yesterday I felt rummy all day. Hopefully with a few restful days I will be feeling better soon.

Last week I worked for Richard Tominaga in the spuds. He asked if I could work on Tuesday and Wednesday until they finished up a field north of Blackfoot. When I arrived and got on the belt, I couldn't believe the rocks and mud that were coming across. When I visited SaraKay while they were working on the reservation, I wondered why they even needed a crew on the belt, the spuds were so clean and nice, but that wasn't the case in this field. The area was once a creek bed and so we were picking river rock. Also, the rains of the previous week had left the field just dry enough to work but wet enough to create huge clods. With just three of us on the belt, we were really kept busy. The rocks also created problems with the equipment and that slowed us down. Because of these conditions, it was slower than anticipated and we didn't finish until Thursday evening. By the time we were through with the field about 6:00 p.m. I felt like I had had it.

Friday night we took several bags and went to get potatoes from the field in Firth. The difference was amazing. They were coming across clean and smooth. We were able to get several hundred pounds of wonderful spuds and have our supply for the months ahead.

I was reading an article in the Idaho State Journal about what life would be like if we had an epidemic of bird flu. The experts said that until people could get vaccines, health officials would recommend that people stay isolated in their own homes. The question was asked, "How realistic is it to expect that families could hole up for any amount of time and have what they needed to survive?" That gave me some food for thought (no pun intended) and I've been planning to replenish our supplies. It's an ongoing project, to say the least.

On Saturday Daddy and I spent the day in the yard and garden. We cleared off everything including corn stalks and the last of the tomato plants and then Daddy roto-tilled it all. We had scattered grass clippings and he was able to mix those in as he tilled. That is supposed to replenish some of the nutrients lost during the growing season. While I cleared away the weeds next to the road, Daddy worked to repair the fence and then put things away for winter. I think we've mowed the lawn for the last time.

After a busy summer season, the rest from yard and garden is welcome. We have yet to pick apples and store the patio furniture, but it really spruced things up to get the garden cleaned off. It seemed strange for Dad to have a Saturday off from Scouting meetings and events. With SaraKay gone all day to a choir clinic, it gave us a taste of what life is going to be like in the years ahead when she heads off to college. Pretty lonely!

The highlight of the week was the chance to attend a concert that was held Saturday night at the Stephens Performing Arts Center on the ISU campus. Choirs from throughout Idaho were invited to attend the day-long clinic with guest conductor, Weston Noble, and then to perform individually as well as with a huge combined choir. The Chamber Singers participated and SaraKay said it was so worthwhile and fun.

We arrived early enough to get a wonderful seat overlooking the main audience and thoroughly enjoyed hearing school choirs from about 15 high schools as well as two collegiate groups. All the students joined in singing the last four numbers. The conductor said that it was the largest group of choral students ever to perform in a single choir in Idaho. Special risers had been constructed for the occasion. Weston Noble, the director had so much praise for the kids and commented that he has directed choirs from throughout the world (over 900) but that acoustically he has never performed in a finer facility...and to think it was in Pocatello! What a tribute to the Arts Center and the Idaho kids! He said that he loved hearing that the facility was funded in large part by a potato farmer and that he felt that the students were genuine, open, and delightful! Of course, that made all of us parents proud!

I'm going to close and turn this to Dad to finish. We love each of you and pray for you. Hope we get some pics from David of his China adventure. When I called Andrea to see how they were weathering his long absence, Joseph answered the phone and said, "My dad walked on the Great Wall of China!" It truly is amazing! He arrives home today from his 10-day tour and business trip.

[Dad] Last week seemed rather hectic because of meetings each night, Sue working, and SaraKay having a normal busy week. For FHE we

discussed testimonies and patted SK on the back for bearing hers in Fast and Testimony meeting. On Tuesday night, I had a meeting for our council FOS kickoff to train all District and Zone Chairmen. We had a railroad theme and had appropriate hats and railroad whistles for everyone there. Wednesday night was Orchestra and Roundtable. Thursday night was an Eagle Certification Training in Idaho Falls. Friday night was our spud night and then Saturday night was the Choral Festival that Sue wrote about. What a wonderful event and beautiful experience for everyone--participants and audience. We went to Pocatello early enough to go to Sizzler before going to the concert and enjoyed our night out together. The gardening and yard work on Saturday took its toll on us and reminded us of the desirability of downsizing.

October 23, 2006

[Mom] Although the garden is cleared off, we haven't picked our apples yet and our wind break has yet to lose most of its leaves, so we know that that project is ahead of us. I may have to accept the fact that the rest of the fall work will be done in a winter coat and hat and just get it done instead of waiting for nicer weather.

I've appreciated the family updates from many of you. They are such a good source of information for future family histories and having the photos included is just priceless. I have dedicated my Wednesday evenings while SaraKay and Daddy are at orchestra to updating my personal history, which of course transitions into the Larsen family history on March 4, l966. It has been a sweet trip down memory lane as I have referred to journals, family letters, etc. for the information I need. The sad part has been that there have been a lot of "holes" in the time line when neither Daddy or I did much writing and recording and now, looking back and trying to recapture those years is difficult if not impossible. I hope that whatever method you are using, be it weekly, monthly, or yearly family letters, keeping a journal, or just taking time to record events on a private computer program, do something to preserve your memories in "black and white" before they are gone.

As some of you are aware, President Shipley, to whom dad served as a counselor, is presently serving with his wife on a mission to England. We requested that they include us on their email address list and we have been receiving letters from them frequently. The one I read this morning talked about their activation efforts with several families and referring non-members to the missionaries for the lessons. When I visited with Daddy about the letter, we both commented that we are doing the same things here in our ward as they are doing there. I guess the major difference is that we are carrying on our normal lives in the midst of our labors and they are removed and more dedicated in their service.

Anyway, our missionary efforts continue to bring us satisfaction. Yesterday we had nine investigators or less actives attend Sunday meetings. It is so thrilling to see the warm welcome they are receiving and the way in which all the auxiliaries are pulling together to involve them.

When I went to pick up Larissa, the girl who called to see if I was the lady who drove the "church bus," she confided in me that even though she was nine, she still wasn't baptized. She said she really wanted to be baptized and that her mom had told her, "No, you're not going to get baptized!" She said that the other day she asked her mom again and told her that she felt that the reason she was having problems sleeping at night was because she wasn't baptized yet. I stifled a smile when she said this, but couldn't help feeling sorry for this sweet little person who is so eager and ready to embrace the gospel and all its blessings and yet she is in a situation where it's an uphill battle to even get permission to come. Someday when she is a teenager and struggling, her mother may regret holding her back from the one thing that can help her weather the storms ahead. For now, we are just trying to help her get all she can with or without the ordinance.

Last night we did some visits to some of the families we can't catch during the week. It was nearly dark and we were driving past Ann Adam's house, stopping at the junction where the road connects with 150 No. I was looking both ways for any traffic as was Daddy when we pulled away from the intersection and onto 150 N heading west. In just a split-second Daddy braked and in that moment, I saw in our direct pathway, standing in the middle of the road, a small child, dressed in dark winter clothes and standing perfectly still. I don't know how Daddy even saw him but fortunately he did and we came to a stop before hitting him. Seeing another car coming in the opposite direction, I jumped out my passenger door and helped the little boy to the side of the road and to a nearby residence. He was about one-year-old and hardly walking yet. As I

approached the residence, a woman came from behind the trailer where she had been feeding some animals and I explained to her what had happened. By then several other family members had come from the trailer and everyone was trying to decide who to blame for leaving the main gate to the property open.

As Daddy and I continued on our way, we both felt grateful for the Lord's watch care over the situation. Maybe that is the missionary miracle of the week!

We are looking forward to joining some of the family in Logan on Friday. Hopefully Paul will have a safe flight and be able to assess what Thiokol has to offer him. We wish Jenny and kids could join us, too. Jenny's story of their day at the temple reminded me of our experience at the temple this past week. As I sat through the session, I was impressed with just how many blessings are promised to us as parents and our children if we will live worthy of them. Not that life will be easy, but we will have the strength and comfort through our trials and struggles We love each one of you and pray for your happiness. Keep touch.

[Dad] In many ways, the weeks just seem to be a blur and I have to really think to remember many specifics about what has taken place. For FHE tonight we reviewed the conference talk by Dallin Oaks and marveled again at the love of our Savior and willingness to heal all our ills or bless us with the strength we need to bear our trials or afflictions. Sue told you about our Sabbath and the missionary rewards we are experiencing. Saturday we went to Idaho Falls to go to Chesbro's for some music and books that SaraKay needs for her piano students (and she is adding to the list and is up to four now) and then to spend time at DI looking for outfits that would meet costuming needs for the upcoming musical. DI has been an incredible source for such needs; the Lord provides.

[Dad] Friday we broke away early afternoon and went to the temple. It seems like the Spirit cries out for that nourishment if we go too long between visits. One of my main activities of last week was starting to collect items for the Holiday Auction from businesses here in town. That is one of the things I am not going to miss when I retire!

Before the weather changed and got too cold it was necessary to seal the add-on to the Blackfoot office. So that was one of the things that was high on my list for last week. The day after finishing that job, the man came to put up rain gutters and it was fortunate to have things sealed and ready. The next projects are painting the whole office inside and then getting the carpet replaced. We are trying to get a couple new cub scout packs organized for the Riverside and Moreland Elementary after-school programs. Thanks to Sue's help, we have finished our inventory calls with all our Primary Presidents and these two units are about my only other possibility for new additional cub scouts. We are getting into recharter time and are doing it over the internet as well as all advancement reports are supposed to be done over the internet after November 1st.

Enough about work. I have been sorting through all my scout patches and stuff and getting them organized so I know what duplicates I have and what they are worth and so on. If any of you have any particular patch interests, let me know because I plan on starting to sell them in the near future so that we can invest the proceeds and get some interest off the dollars that are just sitting there now.

October 31, 2006

[Mom] I've got just a few minutes before I leave to help in the kitchen for the first night of the Chambers Dinner Show. It is a big fundraiser for the choir and very involved for everyone, parents as well as students. Fortunately, we aren't doing the meal ourselves. A couple in the area caters Dutch oven dinners and so they are doing the meal while we just help in the kitchen. SaraKay is performing a solo as well as several numbers with the choir. She is doing "Just You Wait" from My Fair Lady and has been busy lining up costumes for herself as well as for four others who are helping her stage it. She is understandably nervous and we're nervous for her. There are three nights of performances and the students also have set-up and clean-up each night. Her day started at 4:30 this morning getting ready for 5:30 piano lesson, 6:10 practice, 8:00 school, noon piano lesson, 2:00 set up, 4:00 piano lesson for Whitney Shupe, and then being in costume and ready by 5:30. With those kinds of hours, my biggest fear is that she will get sick from the hours and stress. The truth of the matter is that she'll probably do fine and I'll get sick from the stress! (I feel a cold sore coming on already.)

Last Saturday SaraKay and I attended our first marching band competition in the Holt Arena. We have been wanting to see Sam in action but most of the meets were too far away or on school

days. When we found out this one was close, we jumped at the chance to go. We arrived early and stood and watched several schools perform before Stephani arrived. Having never seen a marching band, we were unprepared for how amazing it was! From the salutes of the directors to the music performed, the orchestrated marching and configurations, and the color guards, it was a purely delightful experience!

When Steph arrived and we got seated, she explained a lot of what was going on and that was even more interesting. It just so happened that Sam's band was the last to perform and since we had previously seen about six other groups, we had an idea of what they were up against. Although we didn't know a lot about how it was judged, we were so impressed with Sam's band and not surprised when they swept all the awards (color guard, percussion, and sound) and took home three first place trophies! Stephani called later and said that the kids were really pumped! What fun!

Early last summer Sam mentioned that he was joining the high school marching band. He went on to describe how they practiced two hours a morning, five mornings a week as well as being required to attend two summer camps. When school was in session, they worked their practices in around school hours, come rain or shine. Once prepared, they have been performing and competing mostly with Utah schools and attending meets throughout the state. This competition at Holt Arena pitted them against the best schools in the region and included Borah High in Boise, Eagle High School, Burley, and a band that came from Bozeman. SaraKay and I thoroughly enjoyed the experience. The only downside of the day was that we couldn't figure out which of the marchers was Sam since they are all dressed in uniforms but Stephani admitted that she couldn't pick him out either so we didn't feel too bad.

Laurel and Anna were elected President and Vice President of their school. Anna called to share the happy news with me and later I talked to Andrea about it. She said that they thought maybe one of them wouldn't get it since they were sisters and the students might think they needed to spread the winning around, but when the voting was completed, they had both won. That's going to be fun for them to work together as officers. Last week Laurel competed in a state-wide piano competition in which she had to play four different styles of music: Baroque, Classical, Romantic, and contemporary. She has been preparing for it for months and felt rewarded when it was announced that she was chosen as first alternate!

Our trip to SLC and Logan was fun. We left about nine Friday morning, loaded with several hundred pounds of potatoes. Our first stop was at Karen's and we had a sweet but short visit with her before continuing on. She showed us pictures of their time saying goodbye to Teresa at the MTC and we empathized with her at how hard that was. Teresa is doing well with the language and seems to be enjoying her time at the MTC.

Next we delivered potatoes to Deniece. We also had time to have a short visit there before continuing on. She mentioned that Katie and Lance are finishing up their schooling in May and that he has taken a position in Missouri. I told her how much Shauntel and Randy had enjoyed their time living in Missouri and she said that they seem pleased with the situation they will have there.

Next we went to visit Grandma Ilene. Kathy had been doing some shopping for her and was just finishing up delivering things to her so we had a short visit with her, too. Grandma is doing so well that we just have to marvel. She has a limp if she walks without her walker or cane but she seems to feel safer with the walker and uses it while she is home and takes the cane when she is away. She is continuing with her extraction work and keeps up her relationship with Wright. We thoroughly enjoyed the chance to see her and visit and continue to appreciate all the efforts of Kathy and Deniece in caring for her. It is such a blessing that she is able to be living at home on her own and still enjoys such good health.

Our next stop was in Wellsville to visit Steve and Bonnie and fam. They have done a lot of work on their yard and enjoy their ward, schools, and neighborhood. The kids are busy with soccer, flute, piano, and violin and they have the typical busy modern young family schedule. It's hard to believe that next year Anne Marie will be starting kindergarten! Steve showed us his office and some of his Ebay merchandise. He is enjoying the opportunity to have an internet business and seems to do well.

At six we met up with the Andersons, Steph and Katie, Steve and Bonnie, Uncle Staff, Paul and Dad and I at a great Mexican restaurant. It was great food and even better company! We had a chance to quiz Paul on his interview and catch up on news of upcoming events in his family's lives. Following dinner Daddy and I made a short stop at

Steph's so that Daddy could give Paul a blessing. That was a fitting climax to a wonderful day of visiting family. On the way home Daddy and I talked about what a joy it is to have time with our adult children and see their goodness and growth.

An added bonus of our Logan trip was our visit with Staff. He met us for dinner and we had a chance to find out how life is going for him. He is presently in the Ogden area with Jennifer and her family. Her husband does computer work and has a good situation there. They recently bought a home and have enough property that they could even have a horse if they wanted. They seem to be doing really well and like the area.

Jimmy is home from Iraq and chances are strong that he won't have to go back since this was his second deployment. When asked about his tour of duty, Staff said that Jimmy doesn't say much except that there were many times when he was in difficult and dangerous situations and that he is so grateful to be home with his sweet wife, Angel, and be able to resume his life. They are presently living in Pennsylvania where Jim works for an airline. Staff seems very happy and doing fine with this time of transition and adjustment. We so enjoyed having him join us.

In closing let me say how much I appreciate your efforts to keep in touch, whether by email, family letters, or phone calls. We love each of you and pray daily for your health and strength. John called this past week and we visited about his family and job. When I asked about how Tessa was doing, he said that one time last week he was holding her and he again received a confirmation of the Lord's goodness to them in preserving her and in strengthening the family through the many months of separation and uncertainty. I appreciated him sharing that with me and had the same truth reaffirmed to me at that time. The Lord loves us and is involved in our lives. Keep the faith.

[Dad] The only bad thing about the marching band competition was that I wasn't able to be there. Unfortunately, that Saturday was a big full day of Cedar Badge staff interviews. We interviewed over 100 kids in as many as nine interviewing stations. They each had to go through four interviews with existing youth staff and an adult advisor in each room. It all ran smoothly except for the bunching up early afternoon when the boys that had gone to the merit badge pow wow at BYU-I arrived. During the interviews I refined the budgets for each Cedar Badge program for next year--Boy Scout, Varsity Scout, and Venturing Kodiak. We have most of the adult staff in place but are still recruiting a few more scoutmasters. We are trying to grow the program to 500 participants next year to celebrate the 40th anniversary. We have the strongest Youth Leadership Training program in the country. The amount we are growing this year is more than most other council's programs all together.

Besides Cedar Badge, my major efforts last week were with Friends of Scouting and Holiday Auction procurement. We had a great meeting with representatives from each of the stakes and worked out an equitable "Fair Share" amount for each stake. One other exciting thing happened last week--we bought a new car. We have had a buyer on the lookout for a low mileage Toyota Avalon for us. He called from the auction on Tuesday and said he had just what we were looking for--a silver '03 Avalon with 42,000 miles. It is a beautiful car and we are delighted with it. It sailed along beautifully on Friday with about 600 pounds of potatoes and food storage aboard when we went to Utah.

November 8, 2006

[Mom] By now most of you have received the photos of Shauntel and Randy's newest edition, Drake Anderson. We received the happy phone call midweek saying that they had been contacted by the Korean agency and told that a little boy had been born and was awaiting their acceptance! Shauntel asked that we remember them in our prayers as they made the final decision as to whether to move ahead with this referral. We guessed, when a picture and statistics on Drake arrived, that the decision had been made and we feel so grateful that we will soon have another baby join the family. Shauntel said tonight that all the acceptance papers are completed and sent off and now it is a waiting game while visas, passports, etc. all are processed. In the meantime, Drake is with a foster family. The time that this process usually takes is about 3-6 months so we all need to be patient. Congratulations!

The Fine Arts Craft Show and Luncheon yesterday was a wonderful success. We planned to feed 160 and had 161 show up so we had a full house. Heather Gwynn and I were in charge of the entertainment and had a combination of musical numbers and a short fashion show. It was well received and went off without a hitch. By the time

we finished cleaning up and undecorating the gym it was 3:30 and we all felt like we had been run over by a truck, but we were pleased with the turnout and made about $1600 for fine arts scholarships and grants. Wal-Mart usually will match our funds and so it gives us some monies to pass around in the district and enhance our programs.

Mrs. Casperson told me that when she attends district and state music competitions that teachers from other areas often ask her how our district always manages to have such a strong program and she tells them that it's because the whole community works together to foster the arts. That's a great tribute to the many dedicated people in our area and has been a blessing to our family individually over the years. SaraKay's busy week is also over. She had good reviews of her number and the Chambers performances. I was in the kitchen on Monday and attended on Wednesday although Daddy attended on Monday since he was out of town on both Wednesday and Thursday. The show was so much more polished by the second and third nights that SaraKay and I both felt badly that Daddy had seen the Monday performance but we were grateful he was able to go at all.

This week is going to be a nice respite from all the work and preparations of the past weeks. I am going to do a little yard work and take myself shopping for my birthday. Daddy always gives me some money to spend and it's something I look forward to every year.

He did something for me on Friday that made my day! He took the afternoon off and helped me dig up, totally, our front flower bed. We've decided to try to get a little more modern look to it and thought that if we cleaned it out now and in the spring we might win the battle against all the perennials that have resided in that space for 25 years. We also had some cement edging put around the house and we hope to clean the area out and put down a weed shield and get things away from the foundation better. But, that is a job for April and we aren't going to worry about it yet. I've raked leaves once but after yesterday's wind, the job needs to be done again. I don't mind it if I have time and I think this week I will. I really love the coziness of the fall season; hot chocolate, BYU football on the radio, and the early evenings. Hope you are enjoying it too.

Yesterday I sat in Relief Society by Donna Jess and Annie Ecchers. Both of these sisters have been less active for many, many years and have now started coming as a result of the efforts of our missionary team. The testimony meeting in R.S. was so touching and the three of us were all sitting, dabbing at our eyes and trying to keep our emotions in check. When we finally made it through the closing prayer, we all agreed that it had been a spiritual feast and that we needed to get ourselves "put back together" before leaving the R.S. room. I thought later at what a sweet experience it is to sit by someone who you've helped come into activity and know that they are feasting, too. I more fully understand the Savior's parables of the lost sheep, coins, or Prodigal son. "How great shall be your joy."

We received word of Jacob and Tenessa's new little one and also of Chris and Korey's new little boy (Staff's). The family continues to grow, to the delight, I am sure, of Barbara and Allan!

[Dad] The big event for me last week was also on Saturday. It was our annual University of Scouting/Cub Scout Pow Wow. We had a struggle finding a place to hold it this year and ended up at the twin University Stake Centers on Barts Way in Pocatello. It ended up being a great venue with four kitchens and plenty of classrooms for all the classes of every kind from Dutch Oven classes to utensil-less cooking, to GPS instruction, creative Courts of Honor, creative den meetings, crafts of all kinds, Dremel carving, geo-cache & Scouting, basic training classes, and on and on. It was well attended with over 450 people and was generally a great success. I am in charge next year and it will be tough to beat.

After it was over at 3:00 we had an Akela's Trail staff meeting for 2 hours. Akela's Trail is Cub Scout specific training for 3 1/2 days that our council has been doing for about 12 years. It is a wonderful course and one that I would recommend any Cub Scout leader attend to enhance their skills and broaden their vision of what Cubbing can do for boys.

Last week I was able to do a little traveling and stand in for Dan Deakin (who was involved in our week-long Wood Badge course) at his meetings in Jackson and Teton Districts. The Jackson meetings were in Jackson Hole and I am impressed with the quality of individuals involved in delivering the scouting program there--most of them are not LDS but they are top drawer. In Teton District the meetings are in Driggs and they are virtually all LDS. Great people and many dear friends--it is a pleasure to be able to attend these

meetings and give input in helping strengthen their work.

November 15, 2006

[Mom] I've had a great birthday and appreciate calls, cards, gifts, and remembrances. It still seems hard to believe that I am 61 years old! I guess if Steph is turning 40 this year, I need to be 60+ years but it just doesn't seem possible. At the last reunion one of the grandkids asked me how I got my hair to do that "funny, puffy, curly thing" and I realized that although I seem normal to me, there is a generation (or two) gap and I look as old to them as my grandmothers did to me when I was a child.

It was wonderful to attend our stake conference and have the video session. We heard from Bonnie Parkin, Dallin H. Oaks, Neil Anderson, and President Faust. Three of the four had ties to Idaho and we enjoyed hearing them reminisce about those ties. When the meeting first started, SaraKay asked me how the Idaho broadcast would differ from those transmitted to other areas in the world and I told her that maybe they would talk about potatoes in our session. She knew I was just joking but what a surprise to see how many times potatoes were mentioned! I guess we are still famous for our potatoes.

The other funny thing was that two of the speakers remembered singing "And Here We Have Idaho!" Since it is kind of a family joke with all the in-laws that we all know our state song, I thought it was funny that it was mentioned twice in our meeting. President Oaks seemed so at ease and casual compared to his conference addresses that it was fun to see another side of him. Our stake center was packed and there were video feeds into all the larger rooms which were also packed.

Last week we had another encouraging experience with our missionary efforts. The bishop had received memberships of a family and asked us to visit them. When we made the visit we discovered that they had been living there for a year but their records had been sent to the wrong ward. Apparently the 11-year-old son had been taught the gospel and baptized last year but the missionaries didn't ask the Dad, Terry, who had sat in on the discussions, if he was interested, too. Terry told us that he felt a little slighted and "bittered" that they didn't include him. We had a good visit and are hoping to see them again this week and line up lessons for Terry. The wife is already a member although she works at Wal-Mart and is sporadic in her attendance. They were so happy to see us and really made us feel welcome. I was a little nervous because there were cats in the house and I knew that if I stayed too long that I would pay for it later. Hopefully we will get them to meetings this week and get Bailey registered in scouts and attending the troop.

President Jenks's comments at the Saturday night session were focused on retention, activation, and missionary work. It's certainly a blessing in our lives to be involved like we are and feeling like we are reaching out to those members on the fringes and helping them find a way back.

When I visited with Shauntel on Sunday she said that they keep touch with the adoption committee and continue to pray that the paper work and details can be expedited so they can get their baby. They were told that it would probably be February before things would be ready but they are hoping it won't be quite that long. Of course, she is also concerned about getting flight tickets in advance to keep the costs down, but without a set date, that is almost an impossibility.

I'm going to sign off and get supper on for Daddy. We are going to attend a viewing tonight for Bishop Blight who was serving as bishop of the Moreland Third Ward and who died of a brain tumor last Friday. He had only been bishop just over a year but was certainly loved and respected. He was 67.

[Dad] Just a forewarning--one of the activities at Thanksgiving is going to be singing, "Here We Have Idaho." We need to keep that song fresh in all your memories. At Bishop Blight's viewing we visited with Gary Elison and he commented on how interesting it is to read the obituaries and to realize that two thirds of them are about people younger than he is. He also commented on what a special man Bishop Blight was--closer to being an angel than anyone he knew.

Last week I had the opportunity to visit the Idaho Leadership Academy to make a presentation to their student council about Venturing. It is always fun to go there because of the fuss that is made over Gary and I and how much we look alike. One of my major tasks has been gathering donations for the Holiday Auctions and all-day Friday was spent in Idaho Falls with final preparations and setup and then helping carry it off. It was a great success and we had more people there than we have ever had before and ended up netting about 5-10% more than the past. This week is the one

in Pocatello and Mike and Marci, Sue and SaraKay are going to help with it. Hopefully it will be as successful as the one in Idaho Falls.

Another major event of the week was the final round of interviews for Cedar Badge Staff and then the selection "draft." It was interesting to be a part of that whole process and I felt the guidance of the Spirit in many of the choices that were made. These are outstanding young men and do such a wonderful job when allowed the autonomy to lead, guide, train, and choose with a little guidance from the adult advisors behind it all. With the expansion of Cedar Badge to 500 participants to celebrate the 40th anniversary we will have a total staff of about 200 and a youth staff of about 130. We interviewed about 170 youth to fill 100 positions, so in some cases we had to make tough choices.

November 21, 2006

[Mom] I've had a great time today getting things ready for the upcoming holiday and having Daddy around the house. He informed me last night as we were scheduling that he was going to take the week off since he still has vacation time coming that needs to be used before the end of the year. I very quickly thought of several "honey-do's" that I needed done and he promptly started on my list this morning and has been working all day helping me get ready for the big weekend.

The weather today has been beautiful! I keep crossing my fingers that it will hold until we get our weekend festivities completed. I heard a weather report this morning that stated that snow is expected for Thursday but warming on Friday so that was encouraging.

I worked a couple days last week at Gorder's Honey. They needed some honey bears labeled and it worked well for me to just go over and work for a few hours. It is such a pleasant situation and not physically strenuous. In fact, I was thinking that it was a lot easier than some of the days I've spent here at home. I quite enjoyed myself with my tape recorder and some interesting tapes. I don't have any pressures and can take it at my own pace.

I was called to be choir president to our new directors, Rick and Tiffani Earl. Our choir has been slowly dying these past few months since we lost our director and we didn't think we would even get to have a musical Christmas program this year. We had our first practice Sunday and Tiffani had outlined the entire Christmas program and had folders made up for us. We had a good practice and then I met with them and talked over some of the things we want to implement. The bishop set me apart Sunday and told me that I was there to "rally the troops" and help the choir get going again. I was thinking the other day about how much I have used my cheerleading talents over the years! I still regret that I put my cheerleading ahead of piano lessons, but I guess those skills aren't a total loss, especially when I'm "rallying the troops."

I'm going to quit and get dinner going. Just a quick reminder about those of you who are coming for Thanksgiving. Bring your food assignment, cereal for breakfast, sleeping bags for kids (we have beds for adults), pillows, warm clothes to work in outside, a swim suit if you want to swim on Friday, gym shoes for our time at the gym, favorite videos and games, and any musical number you want to perform. We'll have an FHE Thursday night before Steve and Bonnie head home. If you haven't sent me the "interesting, but little-known fact" about each member of your family, please do so. Mike thinks we need two per person so that it is harder to guess so would that be too hard to come up with? I will await your email. We'll miss those who can't be with us but we're grateful that they have wonderful friends that serve as family during holidays.

[Dad] As I read the above, I thought that we should put the little-known facts in writing and share with those too far away to join us. We also, should keep the cameras clicking and share all that we can.

One of Sue's pet peeves and concerns for the holiday crowd was the toilet downstairs. I tried to convince her that we just needed to have careful instruction on the coordination of flushing with bowel movement and the number of squares of toilet paper and we would get along just fine, but she convinced me that with all the usage that toilet gets and with the number of grandkids using it that it needed to be more reliable. So, I finally bit the bullet and pulled the toilet downstairs and replaced it. I never expected the enthusiastic cheering from SaraKay and her mother that that action elicited.

Yesterday was such a beautiful day that I even went for a bike ride after finishing off the toilet. It really seemed strange to be riding in daylight, but it was refreshing. Last night for FHE we went to a court of honor for the troop sponsored by the Catholic Church in town. It ended up being a

dinner as well with some of the best homemade soups to choose from.

Afterward, I went with the missionaries and a Spanish speaking missionary to deliver a food basket to Maria Cruz and her family. She was so grateful and said she had decided not to buy a turkey this year because of economics. The basket had been put together by the family of one of our reactivated sisters and was so much needed and appreciated. It is wonderful to see the power of the gospel to turn our hearts to others even when resources might be limited.

Last Saturday was the Scouting for Food good turn. We give all the food we raise to SEICCA, a local agency that also doubles as the Salvation Army and distributes the food to the less fortunate and needy in our community. It is always gratifying to see the response of the community as we refill the pantry for SEICCA and make it possible for them to continue to assist those in need.

On Friday, most of the day was spent in preparing and setting up for the Holiday Auction that night. We had a great crowd and lots of good things for them to bid on and it was a great success as a fundraiser as we broke previous records. On Thursday, we found out that our council Scout Executive, Kim Hansen, has decided to retire at the end of this month. We also found out that David Jones, who is the mastermind behind our public relations, relations with United Way, Holiday Auction, and so on, is going to leave us to become the Scout Executive in El Paso, Texas. So, we are going to be a little short-handed again as we come to the end of the year.

November 29, 2006

[Mom] The holiday was certainly a highlight for me. It seems like the older the grandchildren get, the more fun our gatherings are. It is just great to have them old enough that they are able to participate and contribute in our activities.

On Wednesday evening Mike and Marci, Shauntel and Randy, Steph and Lin, (and families) and Tim arrived. SaraKay and I had been cooking and cleaning for several days in preparation for the weekend and were so excited for everyone to come. Randy had arranged for a high-speed internet connection so that he could work from here and we were pleased that he could be a part of things, too. While we figured out the last details of the next day's meal, the families unloaded their cars and got everyone settled into a bedroom. Thursday morning Steve and Bonnie and Dave and Andrea arrived. While we finished up the last details of the meal, the grandkids played games and helped out with setting the table. We appreciated everyone's help with the meal and snacks for later. That afternoon we played a rousing game of volleyball and basketball at the stake center and then had games and a musical program that evening.

Several weeks ago, David suggested that the group do a service project for us when they came and so on Friday morning everyone donned their winter coats and gloves and worked in the yard, raking and hauling leaves, digging out the area around the house, cleaning up branches from our windbreak, and helping Daddy get the place winterized. It was such a beautiful, crisp, fall morning and perfect weather to be outside. It was heartwarming to see everyone so willing to help. By 11:00 am we were through with the project and enjoying some donuts provided by Steph and Lin. Thank you to everyone for helping out!

On Saturday those still left here made big plans to watch the Utah/BYU football game. Because we had high-speed internet, we were able to get the game on our computer. Mike and Tim rigged up a projector to the computer and displayed it on our office wall. We settled in for a nail-biting game which ended in a touchdown pass in the last three seconds of the game to give BYU a win over Utah for the first time in five years. What a thriller! Someone gave the statistic that there were four touchdowns in the last three minutes of the game! Both teams played their hearts out!

Yesterday and today I have been puttering around the house, putting bedrooms back together. I took two naps yesterday and still feel like I need another one this morning. Daddy and I want to express again our appreciation to those who helped with yard work and for each family's efforts to be here and join with us. We were so pleased to hear that those who were away had places to go and things to do, too.

[Dad] Sue gave a pretty good rundown on the Thanksgiving weekend. I took the week off and was able to help with some of the preparations, furniture moving, plumbing, and blowing up an inflatable extra bed. We had a wonderful time and it was so rewarding to have everyone have such a fun and fulfilling time. The food was wonderful, of course. The biggest problem is the

fridge is full with leftovers and I just hope we can eat things up before they spoil.

Even with company here, Friday night we went to Mindy Ellis's wedding and Sue helped in the kitchen for an hour and I took the missionaries out for the evening and had some great visits. With taking boys to scouts, delivering a "turkey and all the trimmings" basket, team teaching, and picking up kids for Primary we had a pretty full week of missionary contacts to report even though we didn't specifically go out for our usual Tuesday night visits.

Sunday, Max Twiggs and Nolan Furniss were released from our High Priest group leadership. Dale Taylor was retained as 2nd assistant, Dale Shelley was sustained as 1st assistant, and Farrell Wray was sustained and set apart as Group Leader. Max and Nolan have really had an impact over the years with the breadth of service they have rendered from putting in lawns, remodeling bathrooms, shingling roofs, plowing snow, spraying chemicals, replacing a domestic pump and pressure system, and on and on. Whenever there was an observed need--the high priests were there to help with financial resources, equipment and labor. Their regular visits and delivering "Jelly Bellies" will be remembered for a long time. When I was in the Stake Presidency, I often wished we could clone them to assist other priesthood quorums and groups.

A few days before Thanksgiving I finished the New Testament. It has been a long time since I have read both the Old Testament and the New. It certainly helped affirm that God does indeed speak to prophets--anciently on both hemispheres--and to the whole world through modern prophets. I missed most of October Conference because I was flying home from Korea that Saturday so I have really relished reading the talks online and in the Ensign and trying to catch up. The whole conference on CD's just came and I am looking forward to experiencing the messages first hand.

Just a quick comment about the BYU vs Utah game. It was thrilling to be able to share that game with a couple avid fans. The "high five's" and yells and groans were so much more meaningful being shared. It almost seemed like a miracle for the Y to come out on top in the last seconds. Love to all of you.

December 5, 2006

[Mom] It's cold again today although the sky is clear and sunny. The big snowstorm that was due in last week never arrived and we have only a skiff of snow on the ground. It surprised us last night to hear that the Boise Larsen's have more snow so far than either Blackfoot or the Cache Valley area. That is unusual for Boise!

When the alarm went off this morning, Daddy commented that he thought SaraKay was sleeping in the guest room instead of downstairs in her bedroom. Later she told me that she woke up in the middle of the night and couldn't get back to sleep so she came upstairs, read for a while, and then slept in the guest room for the balance of the night. She has been doing this several times the last few weeks and I think it is her nerves over her upcoming performance. She has worked on her concerto for the last six months at the exclusion of everything else and her performance is this Thursday evening. I can't blame her for having a case of the nerves! We'll all be relieved to have it over. We would really appreciate your faith and prayers in her behalf this week.

We attended the First Presidency Christmas Fireside last night and marveled again at the beautiful Conference Center, the inspirational talks, and the sublime music of the Tabernacle Choir and The Orchestra at Temple Square! We are so blessed to have access to these broadcasts!

On Friday night Daddy and I participated in a community Christmas choir festival held at the Blackfoot High School Performing Arts Center. There were choirs from all the LDS stakes as well as five other faiths. The other churches mostly had small groups or soloists but the stakes had large choirs. After it was over Daddy commented that we have been spoiled by the CD's we have of the Tabernacle Choir. We are so accustomed to their level of excellence that it is hard for any other choir to measure up.

It was a wonderful opportunity to mix and mingle with people of other faiths, though, and we volunteered to usher so we had a great time visiting and seeing people from all over the area that we don't usually get to see. Daddy has such a broad base of associates because of his scouting position and it's always fun to be with him and meet new people.

I better go and get started on my day. This is "pecan log" week with our visiting for the holidays

starting. We have about 30 families we hope to see in these next few weeks and it's fun to take them a treat along with our visit. We have one young family that is taking the lessons and several others who we continue to encourage. It certainly is a challenge to help people change habits of a lifetime and start living the gospel. I'm so grateful that I was raised with the gospel and haven't developed addictions or other problems that would keep me from full church activity.

[Dad] For the last week and a half I have been trying to practice my trumpet for a while each day and to build up my endurance. For our concert we are playing some difficult pieces and the Haydn especially is a "lip killer." It is exciting to have SaraKay playing her concerto. Most rehearsals then the whole orchestra applauds her after we play the Rachmaninoff.

Thanks to each of you who went into the Christmas gift for us of the camcorder. It arrived at the end of last week and it has been interesting to get the battery charged and to start playing with it and to try to become familiar with it. At first, I couldn't get it to do anything and then found out that we had (+) minidvds instead of (-). Once we had the right medium everything worked great and we are excited to use it and hope we can set things up for Thursday night.

December 13, 2006

[Mom] Well another day has dawned and we are on the final Christmas countdown. It always turns into a marathon at this point, trying to cram into the remaining days all the festivities and shopping that need to be done. Yesterday as we were getting ready for the stake concert, Daddy asked SaraKay if she liked his new suit that he got for his birthday. It was so similar to his other suit that she hadn't noticed it right off. She commented that the headlines of this week's family letter should read, "Dad wears birthday suit to annual stake Christmas Concert!"

I guess other news headlines for this week are, "Outdoor Christmas lights finally appear at Larsen house" or "Orchestra performance successfully completed.....at last!" Let me take a moment and tell about SaraKay's concert since many of you have inquired. Last year SaraKay spent most of her efforts preparing for her festival pieces but after festival was over Linnea suggested that she select a concerto for this year to perform with the community orchestra. This opportunity is one that Linnea gives her advanced students and she asked SaraKay if she thought she could get one ready by Christmas. She thought it would be doable so they went through several possible pieces. Linnea favored one by Mendelssohn. When SaraKay got home from her lesson, she commented that she wanted to do something bold and powerful this year since her List number "Un Sospiro" from last year was more delicate. She had heard a Rachmaninoff concerto that she just loved and so she asked Linnea if she could do it and she agreed.

When SaraKay took her last lesson in May, Linnea said, "When you come back the end of August, you need to have this learned and memorized." It surprised SaraKay since it was about 25 pages long and very detailed. Well, she brought the music home and when the summer vacation started, she began learning it. I would listen to her practice and after a few days I could tell that it wasn't going anywhere. One day she expressed that the piece was just too difficult and she didn't know how in the world she would ever get through it. We decided to count the measures, count how many days she had available from June to September to practice (taking out time for camps, reunions, family trips, Sundays, etc.) and then we tabulated how much she would need to learn each day to meet the goal. We figured that if she kept to her schedule, she would need to learn just a few measures each day. Well, that was the way she ate the proverbial "elephant." She followed the schedule and when she went to her first lesson in August, she had it learned and had parts of it by memory.

When school started, with her involvement in Chambers and a heavy academic schedule, her practicing became more sporadic. Assignments to accompany groups and individuals increased and Chambers demands kept her on the run. The first few times she went through it with the orchestra it was a disaster and she would come home upset and discouraged. We made it a matter of prayer and finally, one night it came together with the orchestra.

As the date for the concert drew near, I could feel the pressures building. She would get up at five and practice before school, and skip lunch to practice on the baby grand in the auditorium. On Wednesday evening I attended the rehearsal for the first time and practiced videotaping it so that she could see herself and I could feel comfortable with the camera. She played it without a hitch and I felt my nerves calm a little.

Originally when we had talked about the concert, SaraKay had expressed a reluctance to invite family and friends and didn't want us to make a big deal of it, but as the concert date neared, she asked if anyone would be coming and we said that since we had the video camera, we hadn't pressed any of the kids to come. We knew how busy young families are at Christmastime and didn't want to impose. For the first time she expressed disappointment that none of her siblings would be there.

When Steph called to see if the camera had arrived, Daddy asked if there was any chance she could come. The next day she called and said that she and Shauntel would make a quick trip and be here. (Katie came too and we really appreciated that). A day later Marci called and said that they had read about the performance in the family letter and wanted to come, too. It made it special for SaraKay to have some family here for support.

When her performance began, she started off beautifully but not too far into it, she lost her focus and for several measures she struggled to get back into the flow of it. Finally, she got going again and did well until she hit another spot and had a memory lapse. My heart sunk. I worried that she might lose her confidence and blow the whole performance. After that memory lapse, she found her stride and got going and played the balance of the piece without a glitch. It was such a thrill to see her come through it and end so strong.

At the conclusion of the concert she was able to visit with the audience in the commons area and received congratulations from her family, friends and teachers. It was pretty teary but rewarding for her to feel of their love and support. They are the "village" that has encouraged her over the years and I am so grateful for their continuing influence in her life. It was a huge relief to have it go so well. Later at home we sat on the couch and watched the video of it and rehashed it all (sounds like the sessions we used to have after recitals and basketball games). Thanks to all who sent emails, cards, phoned, or made the trip to show support. It has been so nice, too, for Daddy to be in the orchestra and share these experiences with SaraKay.

Last night our annual Christmas concert was wonderful. Every ward had a choir and the finale of the Hallelujah Chorus was the icing on the cake. I sat through most of the concert noticing how many of my kid's friends were singing in the choirs and thought about how proud I was of them keeping music in their lives. Afterward we talked with Cass Baldwin and Cody Shelley and they said that they never imagined they would be singing in their ward choirs. I guess all the exposure to music in their homes, school, and communities made more of an impression than they ever realized. Christmas music just makes the season for me!

[Dad] I don't have much to add to what Sue has written. Work has been much more of the same and trying to find additional youth attending Scouting groups that aren't registered or organizing new units and pulling in new youth that way. Much of my efforts right now also relate to getting ready for the Friends of Scouting drive that most of the Blackfoot stakes are starting right after the holidays.

It is surprising to me how much action we see with our bird and squirrel feeders. The back yard is so nice and clean of leaves because of the efforts of so many the day after Thanksgiving. We have had a little snow, but it has been warm enough that it melts during the day so nothing has accumulated.

December 20, 2006

[Mom] This is your official Christmas card this year! Seems like all we can handle is one every other year so be notified that this is the "Off" year and one will come in '07. We have appreciated the cards we've received from many of you and rejoice in the goodness of your lives and the peace and happiness you are enjoying. May the upcoming year be full of wonderful and growing experiences for each of you. (Are "wonderful" and "growing" contradictory terms?)

The big news of the week is that Shauntel and Randy received word that their baby's papers have been processed and he is ready to be adopted. This news, coming two months sooner than they had been told it would, put their household in a frenzy. The biggest problem being the securing of tickets and providing for Archie while they were going to be gone. Shauntel spent nearly six hours on the phone with Delta Airlines on Monday after being notified by the adoption agency that things were ready. The airlines give special rates to parents of adoptees but because of the late notice and the holidays, it was nearly impossible to get the special rates. After many, many phone calls Shauntel was able to get the special rates for her and Camille on the flight to

Seoul but unable to get them for the return flight on New Year's Eve. As you can imagine, the cost for tickets is astronomical at this time of year.

Randy got the week off and he and Archie are going to spend most of the week making a trip to Disneyland and visiting with some of Randy's family who will be home for the holidays. So while Shauntel is packing her and Camille for Korea, Randy is making arrangements for him and Archie to have their own party. They will all spend the night in SLC at a motel and leave Friday morning. I know Shauntel has been struggling with a cold and sore throat and commented to me yesterday that she had hoped to be "at the top of her game" when she made the trip to Korea, whereas she is feeling sick and harried and wondering if everything is going to come together. Thank goodness she has Becky at the other end of this trip, waiting with open arms and a husband fluent in Korean to help out. Although this adoption has been expensive, it would be even more so if they had to do it without Becky and Chet's help. Our prayers go with them.

Today Tim, Emily, Mike, and Marci are leaving for Utah. Marci will spend Thursday and Friday with her parents and Tim, Emily, and Mike will continue on to Vegas for the bowl game. They will spend tonight at Marci's parents' condo in St. George and then continue on to Las Vegas on Thursday. I guess Mike is the official chaperone for Tim and Emily although Mike's ticket at the game is with Marci's brother and Emily will be using Mike's ticket. Anyway, they figured it all out and are excited about it

As for us, we will go to Logan tomorrow for a family party hosted by Steph and Linds and watch the game there between decorating gingerbread houses and having dinner. “A good time will be had by all.” Best close. Have a Merry Christmas. We will try to call everyone Christmas Eve or day. We love you and pray for you. Mom

[Dad] We are ever so grateful for our early Christmas present from many of you kids. We have figured out how to plug it into the TV and play back what we have filmed. It was a thrill to be able to watch SaraKay playing her concerto full size on the TV. It was even better than being there because we knew the outcome and weren't tied up in knots fearing–I don't know what we would have been fearing, for we should have had faith in her hours and hours of diligent preparation and all the prayers in her behalf and priesthood blessings she had received. We were also able to watch last night’s choir concert.

Monday night for FHE we watched the "Sweetwater Rescue" on PBS. It is a Groberg documentary about the Martin and Willie Handcart companies and their rescue--one of the most heroic events of the 19th century. We had watched an hour on BYU TV telling about the filming--including costuming, props, extra's--volunteers mainly from Colorado--some of which were descendants of members of the companies, the music, and so on. It was a great production and sure helps fill your heart with gratitude for the sacrifices the pioneers made so we could sit in our warm comfortable homes watching re-enactments of their sacrifices.

The last few days I have been listening to the CD's of October Conference. I missed the first day including the General Priesthood session because I was flying back from Korea that day. Though I have read most of the talks, there is nothing to compare with hearing the messages in the actual voice of the giver. And to have them interspersed with the music that adds so much to the spirit.

Friday night was our company Christmas party at the Shilling House Reception Center here in Blackfoot. We had an excellent meal, a fun time and even received a small Christmas bonus. We really enjoy the caliber of people we have the opportunity of working with and the positive environment we work in. One of my men, Dan Deakin and his family stayed with us that night along with Mike & Marci & Amber. We had such an enjoyable time with the Burley bunch and recognize again how blessed we are with the wonderful grandchildren coming into our family.

December 30, 2006

[Mom] Well Christmas has come and gone and we have survived another holiday season. It is always a hectic time despite our best efforts to simplify. Hopefully each of you had time to celebrate and have some "down" time to catch your breath before jumping into the new year.

We appreciated the Bennion’s hosting the family Christmas party. They scheduled it on the same day as the Vegas Bowl and between decorating graham cracker houses and gingerbread men, having a delicious soup and salad supper, and watching the bowl game, we had a great time. One of my favorite memories of the evening was when we first arrived and walked into their house. The glitter of all the decorations

was welcoming, but as we walked into the family room and saw Steph and her three kids hard at work taking care of last-minute details in the kitchen, it put me in mind of the many fun times our family has shared in the kitchen, and it warmed my heart.

The family party came on the tail end of a horrendous week for Shauntel and Randy and it was nice to be together and share some of their worries about their Korean saga. On Monday they had received word that all the paper work was completed and that the adoption agency would be ready on Wednesday, the 27th to relinquish custody of the baby boy, Drake, to Shauntel. It was wonderful news for the Andersons except that Camille's passport hadn't yet arrived. Since both Shaunnie's and Camille's were requested at the same time, Shaunnie felt that it would soon arrive and they booked flights through Travelocity, taking advantage of the airlines reduced rates for parents traveling to get an adopted baby.

Their flight tickets were for Friday, Dec. 22nd, and so each morning they would go to the post office to check and see if the passport had arrived. Finally, they called the government office that issues the passports and found out that for some unknown reason, Camille's hadn't been sent until that Monday and with all the holiday mail, it had been delayed.

Now the question came as to whether Shauntel should make the trip alone or try to cancel the flights. She and Randy started trying to get through to Travelocity and because of the huge number of cancelled flights because of the snow in Denver, they were unable to get through to someone. When they arrived at the family party, they continued calling, leaving the phone on speaker and waiting for a representative to come on line. Shauntel and Randy felt that if they didn't notify someone of their change of plans that they wouldn't be able to get a refund on their tickets and that was a major concern.

Very late that same evening, they phoned the Travelocity International number and visited with someone who reassured them that they wouldn't be charged for their unused tickets since the flight to California had been cancelled anyway due to the Denver mess. What a relief! They were able to visit with HOLT, the adoption agency, and they understood what was going on and were willing to delay another week. Today Shauntel called and said that Camille's passport had arrived and they are scheduled to fly out Tuesday evening at 9:30 p.m. from SLC. Our prayers go with them. If all goes according to plan, they will return January 12th.

Saturday night Tim and Emily arrived home about six. They were both exhausted from their five-day trip to Las Vegas, the bowl game, and visiting relatives and friends in Provo. We made them sit down and tell us in great detail about their trip and the proposal of marriage that took place on a carriage ride around Temple Square block. Tim had typed up a proposal entitled "A Proposed Reorganization of Single Entities, Emily Esplin and Timothy Larsen." It was fashioned after a business merger and was ten pages worth of documents. It was pretty clever!

Sunday Tim and Emily attended sacrament meeting with us and enjoyed sharing their news with ward members and friends. Later they attended Emily's meetings and did the same. That afternoon we joined the Esplin's for a delicious turkey dinner and reminisced over dinner about our families. It was amazing to see just how much we have in common! We so appreciated their sweet invitation and returned home to complete our Christmas preparations before going to bed.

Tim and Emily have been back and forth the last few days and this afternoon she is working at her father's law office and Tim is working with her on some taxes he is doing for Becky and Chet. It has been a special treat for Daddy and I to have Tim around for a few days to visit with us. Usually he is on the run and not able to stay very long but this week has been so nice to have time together. He seems very content and happy with Emily and is trying to spend every minute with her since once he returns to Boise and his new job, he will have very little time to court.

John and Laurel's good news of the week is that John was offered a job in the Ford North America division that is headquartered right there in Detroit and they will be able to stay put and not move again. The Pacific Area division of Ford is being headquartered in Bangkok and the department will no longer be in Detroit so if John wanted to stay with the China production, he would have to move his family foreign again and that just isn't what is best for them right now. Tessa continues to progress and they feel like Canton is home. We are grateful for this development and wish them the best.

Paul will be leaving again on Jan. 4th for more interviews and requests your prayers in their

behalf as he completes his job search. They are in Chicago today attending the temple. They have a motel room and trade off taking care of the kids and going to the temple. What great examples they are to us!

We had a couple of Christmas miracles in our missionary work. One involved the three children that I bus to church each Sunday. When I visited with them earlier in the week about attending church on Sunday, they weren't sure that they could since it was kind of a holiday and their families had activities. I asked them to call me if they needed rides but no one called and Sunday morning was so hectic that I decided not to go. It had been snowing and the roads were icy and I had had so much to do with our Christmas program that I was beat by the time our program was over. Well, to make the account short, I decided to drive over anyway and to my surprise, all three children were dressed and ready for church, even waiting outside for my arrival! I kept thinking how grateful I was that they weren't disappointed and left without a ride.

Second miracle concerned one of our investigators who had served a mission but had since lost his church membership. He and his new bride who belongs to the Catholic church recently bought a home in our ward and have been fixing it up. They heat the home with a wood burning stove and recently their neighbor, a fellow who we have activated this past two years, noticed that their wood supply was running low. After inquiring, he offered to help his neighbor find some wood and get it cut up. In priesthood meeting the need was discussed and Daddy offered our saw but also offered to give them some of our wood in our bin since we only use it in an emergency. Well, Ben came over last week with his big pickup and took a load back to the Jensen's. When he arrived, the wife came out and told him that they had just burned their last log and that she had been on her knees praying that the way would be provided that they could get some wood. Ben was a welcomed answer to prayer! Maybe his goodness will help open the door there for the missionaries to teach the wife and help them find their way back to the church.

[Dad] We truly have had some wonderful family times over the last couple of weeks. The party at the Bennion's was great and it was even better because of the outcome of the football game. The time with Tim and also the time with Emily and with the Esplin family has been great. Tim has left KPMG and will be starting a new job when he gets back to Boise. It sounds like mid-February--perhaps President's weekend is the targeted nuptials. We will keep you all posted as plans firm up.

Sue didn't elaborate on the Christmas Choir Program. It turned out splendid--largely due to Sue's extra efforts to get all the music in order in folders, host a small brunch following the Saturday morning practice on the 23rd, and making beautiful Christmas corsages for all the women in the choir. SaraKay and I each had small solo parts and SaraKay played a violin obligato accompanying one of the numbers we sang. We had a lot of compliments on the program and the biggest Sacrament Meeting attendance in a long time.

This week is part of my scheduled vacation and it is hard to not go to work and do the many things that I could be working on. As a council we are within five boys of having our membership target met. In my service area we are over even though I am short 50 boys in Blackfoot. We have had an excellent team effort to contribute to the council making it.

With Tim's help my first Ebay listing of patches for sale is now on the market. It is going to be interesting to see what happens and the kind of interest that these patches will generate. If any of you happen to check out my listings feel free to make suggestions on listing and descriptions that might be more sale-able.

We love each of you and are praying for you and your families. May 2007 be a wonderful year of accomplishment and achieving of worthy goals. May you each be blessed with peace and harmony in your homes and the financial stability to meet your needs.